

## English Grammar through Stories

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## 1. Present simple tense or «It never gets you anywhere»

In this story you will find many examples of how the Present Simple Tense can be used. As you know we use the present simple for things that are true in general, or for things that happen sometimes or all the time:

- She *likes* black tea.
- I start *work* at 9 o'clock and finish at 5:30.
- Water *boils* at 100 degrees Celsius.
- We usually *visit* our friends on the weekend.

You probably remember that after *he/she/it* an «s» is added to the verb as in these examples:

- She *speaks* excellent French.
- He sometimes calls her «my darling».
- It makes perfect sense to me.

When we want to make a negative sentence we use the following structure:

subject (*I/you/we/they*) + auxiliary verb (*don't*) + main verb (*infinitive*)

subject (*he/she/it*) + auxiliary verb (*doesn't*) + main verb (*infinitive*)

Examples:

- I *don't speak* Chinese.
- You *don't work* very hard
- She *doesn't call* me every day.

When we want to make a question we also use *don't* after *I/you/we/they* and *doesn't* after *he/she/it*:

- *Do* you speak Chinese?
- *Does* she work here?
- What *do* you do for a living?
- How *do* you usually get to work?

Now enjoy the following story and find the present simple in *italics*.

«It never gets you anywhere»

Andrew Smodley *is* a natural worrier. It *is* something he has inherited from his father — the king of all worriers. But then there are those who are never happy unless they *have* a problem to solve. Andrew worried about the weather, the state of the pound, his health, the cost of living and once he even worried because he thought he wasn't worrying enough. But that was in the past. Things have changed because something happened to him exactly two years ago.

It was in the spring when leaves *appear* on trees and nature *prepares* herself for renewal. Other things *happen* too — people often *fall* in love. Now Andrew *doesn't have* a romantic disposition. He never *looks* up at the leaves starting to grow, *sighs* and *says*: «Ah here *comes* the spring!» He simply *thinks* to himself: «I *live* in a small village by a little stream and around this time of year lots of creatures *start* to wake up and *make* a lot of noise.» In London, which *stands* on the River Thames, people *make* a lot of noise all the time.»

I *apologize* for the simplicity of these statements but I *want* to illustrate the unimaginative nature which Andrew possesses. Towards the end of this story I *give* examples to show the extent of the change that he underwent.

The other character in this anecdote *is* a young woman called Sally Fairweather. She too *lives* in this tiny and remote village where Andrew *has* his cottage. Now Sally *is* an entirely different kettle of fish. Her philosophy *runs* as follows: «Worrying never *gets* you anywhere and life *is* too short to waste time imagining the worst.»

In a word she *is* the complete opposite in temperament of Andrew. Here *comes* another cliché: Opposites attract. But you *must remember* that two years ago the two main characters hadn't met, which was surprising when you *consider* the proximity of Andrew's cottage and Sally's flat. If you *take* the first left after the post office, you *come* to Sally's place and if you *take* the second turning to the right after that you *come* to the cottage where Andrew *lives*.

The next participant in this village drama *is* the weather, which *plays* a very significant part in English life. It was late April and the sun had disappeared behind dark heavy rain clouds but Andrew had already set off for the local pub. Naturally he had his umbrella with him and a heavy coat following that aphorism his mother always used: «Never cast a clout (remove an article of clothing) before May *is out*.»

Fortunately he made it to the pub before the storm broke. The moment he crossed the doorstep an old schoolfriend *comes* up to Andrew, *offers* to buy him a drink and *tells* him not to look so worried. Andrew showed him the newspaper headlines: «Petrol prices *rise* again.» — «But you *haven't got* a car» said his friend. — «I *know*», retorted Andrew, «still it *means* everything else will go up in price, too.»

Everyone in the pub *looks* suitably depressed at this remark and begins to think of all the price increases that will follow. The gloom *is* palpable. Then suddenly the door *bursts* open and in *walks* our heroine, Sally looking like a drowned rat. Most people in the pub *think* to themselves: «What a pretty girl!» Andrew *sees* her as someone who *is* *drenched* and needs help. He *walks* over to her and *asks* if she is all right. For probably the first time in his life Andrew actually transferred his worry from himself to someone else and he *mixes* her a special drink to protect her from a possible cold. The conversation went as follows: «I *hear* you *live* in this village, too» — «How *do* you *know*?» asked Andrew.

But Sally changed the subject. «This drink *tastes* delicious. How did you make it?» — «I *put* a drop of ginger ale and a piece of lemon in the alcohol and then *stir* thoroughly. I always *keep* those two ingredients with me when I *go out* at night.» Suddenly Sally looked at her watch: «I *must fly*. My train *leaves* in ten minutes.» — «*Don't forget* to take those tablets I suggested and *let* me know how you *are*.» — «I'll let you know as soon as I *come* back from London.» And then she went.

Immediately Andrew started to worry. He didn't know her name, he didn't know her address and he felt strange. He *checks* his pulse. He *tests* his mental faculties: «Two and two *make* four.» It was a different sort of worry that was almost a concern. He *wants* to see her again. Within seconds he rushed out of the pub leaving his coat behind, ran into the pouring rain with no umbrella. What was happening to him? He saw Sally standing on the platform getting into the train and the train leaving the station. He *jumps* down from the platform onto the track and *waves* at the train driver to stop. The train *stops* and Andrew *gets* onto it.

Six weeks after this extraordinary episode Sally got married. Andrew *doesn't worry* any more now. He *stays* calm. The obvious time when people expected him to start worrying was during the wedding ceremony in the village church just over two years ago. As he *says*, «I *know* what everyone was thinking. They thought I would I go to pieces. But I was perfectly relaxed and I *owe* it all to Sally. She *is* certainly a wonderful wife. She smiled at me when we were standing at the altar and I stopped worrying from that moment on. You *can* see me looking relaxed in the newspaper pictures especially that one with the caption:

ANDREW SMODLEY *HANDS* THE RING TO SALLY FAIRWEATHER'S  
FUTURE HUSBAND.»

## 2. Present continuous or «What a performance!»

One of the features of the English language is that there are two sides to every tense: a simple one or a continuous one (also known as *progressive*). The question is when do you use one and not the other? We're looking at the Progressive Forms in general in the story entitled: *Going, going, gone!* and at the Present Simple in particular in the story called: "It never gets you anywhere" and now it's the turn of the Present Continuous/Progressive and this is called: *What a Performance!* Which has a double meaning because it can describe a performance in the theatre and it can also describe a long and complicated process. I only hope when *you are reading it*, that you don't find it too complicated.

### «What a Performance!»

I can't myself. Well, I just couldn't get up on the stage and take part in a play. Some people *are* always *doing* that. They do it for a hobby and are never happier than when they *are declaiming* other people's lines in front of a live audience. They *are living* in a realm of fantasy. They belong to that select world called amateur dramatics, a world that once a year invades the town where I live. Just when the weather *is getting* warmer the festival of amateur drama comes to our local theatre. For one entire week three separate groups *are performing* one play each every evening. In one mad moment a few years ago I agreed to buy a season ticket to see the different productions for all six nights and ever since then each year I get this very correctly written letter beginning: '*I am writing* to inform you that the Summer Festival of Drama *is taking place*....'

Yesterday was the last night. Today *I am resting*. *I am being* perfectly serious. Although each play is around 35 minutes long, there have been 18 of them in all – tragedies, farces, melodramas, theatre of the absurd, of the ridiculous and of the 'How much longer *is this going on?*' The last category is my own personal classification for the really boring ones. And there was one play that could have won a prize for that category. When the curtain goes back, three people *are sitting* in deck chairs and *eating* ice creams. For about ten minutes nobody says a word. The audience is feeling a little embarrassed by this time and then suddenly one of the three starts shouting at the audience: 'Why *are* you all *sitting* there and *staring* at us?' This is a question I asked myself several times during the week! Of course nobody knows what to say. More questions followed, which were not answered. Then there was another pause, then more questions and then they went back to eating their ice creams and that was the end. The old lady next to me was utterly confused. 'Excuse me, she said. 'my deaf aid *isn't working* properly tonight and *I'm hoping* to buy a new one soon. Consequently *I'm not hearing* very well at the moment. Did I miss anything? I laughed and assured her that she hadn't.

But then I suppose *I am being* a little over critical. There were some really good performances as well – the ones that make you forget that you *are sitting* in the theatre. The one I liked best was a

comedy. The play opens in a park. A couple *are* sitting on a bench and they *are having* an argument. He *is trying* to persuade her that he is right and *she is doing* her best to make him believe that he is wrong. It doesn't sound all that funny but the dialogue was so clever and the two performers *are* so obviously *relishing* their roles that the whole audience couldn't stop laughing. But then of course if you get bored with the play, you can always turn your attention to the audience. And with a season ticket you keep sitting next to the same people, which is how I got into trouble on the last night. You have to imagine it is 8 o'clock. Everyone *is sitting* quietly and *waiting* for the curtain to go up. The old lady in the next seat *is adjusting* her hearing aid. The fanfare *is playing* and then – nothing happens. Ten minutes go by. The audience *is becoming* distinctly uncomfortable. Comments like: 'What on earth *is going on?*' 'Are we *seeing* another play?' and '*Is anybody doing* anything about it?' The fanfare *is playing* again. I get the impression that someone *is tapping* my knees but then I realise that it's the woman in front who *is fidgeting*. Again there is silence and then the curtains open at last to reveal a worried looking manager who *is standing* in the middle of the stage. 'Ladies and gentleman', he began 'I regret to tell you that the Sanderson Players *are not performing* tonight. There will now be a short intermission.' It was then I said to my elderly neighbour in I suppose a rather loud voice (but you must remember she *is having* a problem with her hearing): 'Thank goodness! That's one less to worry about.' At that the woman in front who I thought had been fidgeting and had in fact been crying, turned round and addressed me in a hysterical way: 'Do you know who you *are talking* to and who you *are talking* about?' I pleaded ignorant to both questions. 'They are my entire family – husband, son and two daughter and they *are all suffering* the other side of that curtain.' I was impressed with her delivery and thought what a performance she could give as a Shakespearean heroine. I made apologetic noises and decided not to probe further. The rest of the evening passed off without incident and the prizes were distributed.

So after the long week and the little bit of drama in row K I hope you can understand why *I am now relaxing*. *I'm not attending* next year's festival. I've decided. *I'm doing* something a little more dynamic like bungee jumping or white water rafting. Incidentally in case you *are wondering* what the woman in front was on about, I'll explain. The whole family in the Sanderson Players had begged mother not to come to the theatre because she always put them off. She had insisted on coming and so they had refused to perform. If *you're wanting* to know what the play was about, you must guess it from the title: Mother knows best.

### 3. Future tense or «Jealousy»

There is a common belief that the only way to express the future in English is to use the two little modal auxiliaries «will» and «shall». Sure they play a major part in this function but there are other ways too of expressing the future. Below you will see 6 ways of expressing the future. I won't call it the «future tense» because that restricts your thinking about how to talk or write about something that is not *now* but *next*:

#### going to

This way you can express a personal intention or make a prediction about what you know/feel/see as in these sentences:

*I am going to stop smoking this year. The sea is going to be very rough this afternoon, so don't go swimming.*

#### Future Simple

Back to «will» and «shall». With these two words plus the infinitive of a verb you can express: a future fact, a sudden decision, an offer, a threat, a promise, an opinion about the future, a probability especially after think, suppose, expect, doubt if.

Here are a few examples:

*Tomorrow will be my birthday.  
It's all right I'll get the shopping.  
I will take you in the car if you like.  
I'll stand by you whatever happens.  
I suppose we'll manage without the car.*

#### Present Continuous

This is almost the same as «going to» but it's not quite as personal. Look at this:

*The Government is thinking about introducing a new law.*

#### Present Simple

We use this when we are thinking of the certain future, something already arranged as in a timetable or programme:

*Your train leaves in ten minutes.*

#### Is to/Are to

These are used to express an instruction or something arranged officially. Here is an example:

*The finance ministers are to meet next month to discuss the crisis.*

#### About to/Due to

We use these when we want to describe actions that are expected to happen, usually fairly soon. An example:

*The 100 metre race is about to start any minute now.*

Below you can see a story I've written using some highlighted examples of how you can express the future.

### «Jealousy»

I want you to imagine that you *are about to* visit a small village. It doesn't matter which country it's in because all villages are the same whichever part of the world they are in. There were only about 300 inhabitants in total in this particular village and everyone knew everybody's business. A typical street conversation would run like this: «I hear Joan's *going to* have a baby next year. I expect *it'll* be a boy this time I wouldn't be surprised. *She's having* a nurse come next week to help her with her 5 girls and maybe a boy *will make* life easier for her!» In this village people usually help each other whenever they can. If someone is going to the «big» town — that is where there are more than a thousand people living in it — invariably *they will say* to their neighbours: «*I'll get* you some vegetables, if you like». But it's not all sweetness and light here because there is a longstanding feud going on between two families. *I'll let* the local gossip, Mary tell you the background. «It must be ten years ago when it all started. I doubt *it'll* ever stop», she laughed when she said that. «But then I've been told *I am to tell* you the beginning of it all and also *you are to listen*, remember. There are two women who are always arguing about something. One of them lives in that huge house over there. Don't look now because *she'll open* her front door in a minute. *She's going to* catch the 9.15 bus that *goes in* ten minutes from that stop there. Now, she's a fine lady, she is. *She's due to* become a councillor next month after the elections and *she'll* probably make a good job of it. Now hold on a second the other lady *is leaving* her house in a minute. Yes, what did I say? *She's going to* catch the bus too but *she'll get* on at the next stop to avoid meeting the councillor lady. Now the second lady runs a small restaurant, as a matter of fact *I'm taking* lunch there later today.» I asked Mary why these two women didn't get on. She looked me straight in the eye and said: «Jealousy. One runs a successful restaurant and the councillor lady runs a small guesthouse. Both of them *are going to* make a lot of money this year because of the festival but the guesthouse lady *will make* more and she always has done and that's the cause of the trouble.»

Now what I haven't told you», continued Mary, «and *I'm just about to* reveal it, is that there are two other people in the story. Namely the son of one of the ladies and the daughter of the other. And yes, *they are getting married* next year and the whole village *will be invited*. *It's going to be* a big affair» I interrupted Mary at this point and asked her what had happened to the feud. «Oh that doesn't matter much now» continued Mary «*they'll be* too busy making arrangements for the wedding. *They're due to* meet a catering firm this morning». «So what's all this about separate bus stops?» I asked. «Oh, that's just for the tourists who *are coming* here next month.» I tried to understand but had one more question: «And what about jealousy?» — «Now, *you're not to* worry about her. There are plenty of villages round here and *she'll soon find* another one to visit and cause trouble in» I thanked Mary and walked away, totally confused thinking to myself; «*I shall never understand* village life.»



## 4. Articles in English or «Charlie the Brave»

Now in this story you will see many different uses of the articles. First I will give you some brief notes on when to use the definite article «the» and when not and also when to use the indefinite article «a/an» and again when not. Afterwards you can read the story.

### Articles – both definite and indefinite

#### Indefinite – a, an

##### Uses

- Before a singular noun which is countable when it is mentioned for the first time and represents no particular person or thing.  
«A horse is a noble animal.»
- Before a singular countable noun which is used as an example of a class of things.  
«A book is something you read.»
- With a noun complement, including names of professions.  
«She is a doctor, he became a famous actor.»
- In certain numerical expressions.  
«a dozen, a hundred»
- In expressions of price, speed, ratio.  
«60 miles an hour, 4 hours a day, 30p a box»
- With «few» and «little»  
«a few people, a little sugar»
- In exclamations before singular, countable nouns. «What a pity! What a sunny day!»
- It can be placed before Mr., Mrs, Miss, Ms + surname.  
«a Mr. Brown phoned today.»

##### Not Used

- Before plural nouns.  
«Horses are noble animals.»
- Before uncountable nouns  
«Milk is good for you.»
- Before abstract nouns.  
«Fear is natural.»

- Before names of meals except when preceded by an adjective.  
«We had a late breakfast and decided to miss lunch.»

## Definite – the

### Uses

- Before nouns of which there is only one.  
«The earth is round.»
- Before a noun which has become definite as a result of being mentioned a second time.  
«We saw a good film last night. It was the film you recommended.»
- Before a noun made definite by the addition of a phrase or clause.  
«The woman dressed in black.»
- Before a noun which, by reason of locality, can represent only one particular thing.  
«There's a bee in the kitchen.»
- Before superlatives and «first», «second» and «only»  
«The longest river in the world.»
- Before singular nouns used to represent a class of objects.  
«The donkey is a very obstinate animal.»
- Before an adjective used to represent a class of persons.  
«That tax hurts the rich.»
- Before names of seas, rivers, chains of mountains, groups of islands and plural names of countries.  
«the Pacific Ocean, the Thames, the Andes, the West Indies, the Netherlands»
- Before musical instruments.  
«She plays the piano»

### Not Used

- Before countries, towns, proper names.  
«Charlie lived in Chicago in America»
- Before abstract nouns.  
«Jealousy can be dangerous.»
- Before parts of the body and articles of clothing — these normally prefer a possessive adjective.  
«Lift your left arm.»  
«He removed his hat.»

**«Charlie the Brave»**

Charlie is *a* teacher and his wife, Maria is *an* artist. One of *the* main differences between *the* two is that Charlie has no imagination well perhaps *a* little whereas Maria has *the* most vivid imagination you could think of.

Now — imagination is *an* essential quality if you're *an* artist but sometimes it can lead to — problems. Take *the* night before last, for example. It was *a* fine summer night and you could see *the* moon and *the* stars quite clearly, it was shortly before *the* longest day of *the* year. Charlie was sitting in *a* deckchair enjoying *the* warm summer air when he felt something touch *his* shoulder; it was Maria's hand and he could tell immediately she was *a* little worried about something. He had noticed this sensation *a* hundred times before. He asked her what *the* matter was and she replied that there was *a* strange thing on *the* jacket that was hanging in *the* bedroom. Now you must remember that they had both lived in *the* West Indies and had seen *a* lot of strange creatures in their house before. But now they were living in — England and so Charlie just laughed and said he would have *a* look at *the* «thing».

He left *the* garden and made his way to *the* bedroom. He could see *a* jacket hanging in *the* bedroom and went up to it to have *a* closer look at *the*«thing». The moment he touched it, *the* thing sprang into— life. Now Charlie experiences — fear like the rest of us but when this creatures opened *its* wings, he jumped out of *his* skin and ran screaming from *the* room like *a* small child doing about 100 miles *an* hour.

What *a* fuss you may say and *the* brave among you may well regard such behaviour as pathetic but — bats (for this thing was *a* bat) bring out *the* worst in many people. For a moment *the* next-door neighbours thought that Charlie was murdering his wife because of *the* noise they could hear. In fact *the* bat was *the* one that was frightened and it fluttered *its* wings and flew from one side of the bedroom to *the* other.

Eventually Charlie managed to trap *the* bat in *a* box and went out into *the* front garden clutching *the* box as if it had *a* bomb inside it, took off *the* lid and *the* bat, obviously delighted to be free, flew away into *the* dark. Eventually Maria, who had been playing *the* guitar while Charlie was upstairs, asked Charlie if he had found out what *the* thing was. «Oh, nothing to worry about», he said casually hoping that *the* terror could not be seen in his eyes, «it was just *a* bat.»

## 5. Progressive forms or «Going, going, gone!»

In this story you will see many examples of *Progressive Verb Forms* (also known as *Continuous Forms*). Here is the structure of the Progressive Forms:

*subject + auxiliary verb (be) + main verb (gerund)*

Sometimes a modal verb can be used before the auxiliary verb:

*subject + modal verb (could/would/should) + auxiliary verb (be) + main verb (gerund)*

There are other structures such as the Present Perfect Continuous:

*subject + auxiliary verb (have) + past participle (been) + main verb (gerund)*

We use the progressive form when:

- we want to describe an action that is happening right now
- we want to describe an action that will be happening in the future
- we want to describe an activity or process that started in the past and is still going on

Here are some examples:

- We *are reading* an interesting story right now.
- My wife *is flying* to Madrid tomorrow.
- My wife *would be flying* to Madrid tomorrow if she had a holiday.
- Our partners *have been working* with us for 10 years now.

Now enjoy the following story and find the progressive forms in *italics*.

### «Going Going Gone!»

Andrew and Daisy Marvell *were going to* spend another holiday in Majorca. Everyone knew that — the postman knew it, the dustman knew it and their next door neighbours also knew they *would be going* there. The simple reason was that they *had been going* there for their summer holiday for the last twenty-five years.

Most people in Britain are subjected to an endless bombardment of advertisements on television just after Christmas inviting them to book for their summer holiday. The adverts *are constantly telling* viewers that if they book early, they will save enormous amounts of

money but at the same time there is a little voice at the back of peoples' minds that *is suggesting* to them that there will also be bargains if they wait until the last minute. Habit is a significant factor in all this. You did this last year while you were taking down the Christmas decorations and therefore without realizing it, you *will be doing* exactly the same this year. You sit back in your favourite armchair and say: «In six months' time I *shall be sitting* on a sunny beach somewhere and I *shall be reading* my favourite book.»

The Marvells did not believe in leaving things to chance. They believed in planning. On a winter evening around mid-January in the Marvell household the following would be a typical conversation: «*Are you thinking, what I'm thinking* Daisy?» — «I'll tell you what *I'm thinking: I'm dreaming* of my summer holiday at the moment in a lovely warm place, And.» She *was being* very romantic when she called him «And». «And, And (this was Daisy's sense of humour) where *will you be taking* your holiday this summer?» — «I *was thinking* perhaps we might try Majorca, it's said to be very pretty.»

At this stage of the conversation there would be the sound of screams of laughter and the following day Andrew usually booked the holiday. The next-door neighbours, the long-suffering Nortons, heard the laughter too, turned to each other and said: «They're obviously making arrangements to go to Majorca again.»

When Andrew finished work that Monday and *was walking* down the high street to the station to get his train home, he decided to call in at the travel agents to make his booking. When he reached the door, it didn't seem to open in the usual manner. In fact to his surprise it opened outwards instead of inwards. He ought to know, he thought, *he'd been pushing* and not *pulling* it several times a year over the last twenty-five and he usually went to young Jack (now old Jack) *who'd been working* there over the same period of time. The layout was different, too. Something strange *was happening* and poor Andrew couldn't make it out. There was the smell of damp and hot hair. «Can I help you, sir?» asked a young woman in a white overall. — «*I've been coming* here for the last twenty ...» Andrew's jaw dropped. For a moment he thought he *was standing* in the wrong shop, dashed outside and then came back in again. Maybe he *was dreaming* but then it dawned on him, the travel agents had gone and been replaced by a hairdressers. The woman explained: «We opened last week and *are opening* another new premises by the park next month. The travel agents *have been experiencing* a difficult time this year. They *weren't getting* their regular customers.» Andrew just couldn't handle it. If Daisy were here, she *would be feeling* the same. He tried to picture how he *would be explaining* it to her. What *would she be doing* right now at home? She *would probably be preparing* the supper and *expecting* to see the receipt for the booking as he came through the door. What could he do? He was in a hairdressing salon and it was a uni-sex one as well! He didn't know what to do, where to look.

When Andrew eventually reached home about two hours later, Daisy *was speaking* on the phone. She *had been going* frantic trying to find out what had happened to Andrew. As she *was watching* him come

through the door, she couldn't believe it was him. He looked about 20 years younger. Apparently he had been persuaded to stay on at the salon and have his hair done. He *had seriously been considering* having something done for some time and the young woman in the white overall had convinced him that he should experience all the facilities on offer. It wasn't long after that when Daisy gave the salon a try, too. Within three months Andrew and Daisy had become very important customers. It wasn't cheap of course but both their heads were immaculate and they were enjoying the appreciative comments from friends and colleagues including of course the postman, the dustman and the next door neighbours. Normally at this time of year they *would have been saving* hard and putting money aside for the holiday in Majorca but that topic *was not being* discussed at the moment. As the weeks went by they both became very friendly with the young woman in white called Angela and on one of their regular visits she told them:

«*I'm running* a raffle to mark our first 100 days at the salon that's how long *we'll have been doing* business by the end of this week and I *was wondering* whether you would like to buy some tickets.»  
Anxious to keep in favour they paid up, bought six tickets and thought no more about it. About a month later when they arrived at the salon, Angela *was waiting* for them at the door excitedly *waving* an envelope. «*They've just been doing* the draw and you've won first prize.» As Daisy *was* casually *opening* the envelope she half expected to have won a set of hairbrushes or a bottle of champagne. As she read the note, a strange smile *was beginning* to cross her face. «*We're going* on holiday And!» — «Oh, yes that's nice dear and where *are we going?*» — «Somewhere called Majorca, dear.» — «Ah well, said And that'll keep the postman, the dustman and the neighbours happy.»

## 6. Passive voice or «Haunted»

In this story you will see many examples of how the *Passive Voice* can be used. Here is the structure of the Passive Voice:

*subject + auxiliary verb (be) + main verb (past participle)*

Sometimes a modal verb can be used before the auxiliary verb:

*subject + modal verb (could) + auxiliary verb (be) + main verb (past participle)*

We use the passive when:

- we want to make the active object more important
- we do not know the active subject

Now read the short story and try to work out what the constructions in *italics* mean.

### «Haunted»

The house *was built* in the middle of the 18th century and some signs *could still be found* that it had once been a famous meeting place for people who liked playing card games. By the time *it was bought* by my aunt and uncle some two hundred years later *it had been owned* by a long list of different people whose names *are recorded* on the title deeds. As it *is situated* by the sea, it became a favourite place for various members of the family to visit. It also had an added attraction — *it was haunted*, at least so my uncle said.

To this day of course *it never had been proved*. The story according to my uncle was that at certain times of the day, incidentally at all times when the house *was only occupied by him*, a small figure appeared at the bottom of the stairs in the shape of an old lady and held firmly in her hands what appeared to be a walking stick. She waited a moment, looked up the stairs, climbed a few steps to check as if she *was being watched* and then suddenly *she could no longer be seen*.

At this stage in the story *it must be pointed out* that my uncle was a man blessed with a vivid imagination. Once he even convinced his wife shortly after they got married that *he was hypnotized* when they visited the theatre. This turned out to be his excuse for falling asleep because he *was bored*. She *could not be persuaded*. But he was quite definite about the little old lady. «You just wait» he used to say «till you see her. Then you *will be convinced*. » The trouble with the younger generation is that they refuse to believe anything unless it *is presented to them* on a plate. He claimed that *he was endowed* with special psychic powers because he was the seventh son of a seventh son. That was a fact that *couldn't be disputed*. Personally, I didn't believe a word about this so-called ghost. But then when *you are invited* to someone's house you have to be polite.

I had just finished at university and had a couple of weeks holiday before I started my first full-time job when *I was invited by my aunt and uncle to stay for a few days at the famous haunted house. «You are given freedom of the house while you're here», my uncle had said, «and you can carry out any investigations you like concerning our «house ghost» — that was how the old lady was referred to because I want you of all people to to be convinced of the authenticity of this apparition.»* Somehow I was a highly respected member of the family and my uncle firmly believed that my word *was accepted*. The first two days, no sign *was given* of the «ghostly» old lady. On the third day my aunt and uncle asked me if I wanted to come on a lengthy shopping expedition because their supplies now *had been exhausted* and they had to travel some twenty miles to the nearest town that had a supermarket. This ritual regularly *was carried out* once a month. I declined the offer as I had decided it was time for me to go for a swim in the sea. Before they left, meaningful glances *were exchanged* between my aunt and uncle as if they both expected to hear some news from me when they got back. As they left, my uncle turned and said, «You *will be suprised* at what happens, while we are away.»

I went for my swim but the sea was very rough and I constantly *was pushed* onto the beach by the waves. I gave up in the end and made my way back to the house, got washed and dressed, had a bite to eat and sat on the most comfortable chair to watch television. After what seemed like a few minutes, I was aware of an unusual sound as if pieces of material *were rubbed together*. I got up from the chair and walked into the hall. I *was quite taken aback* with what confronted me. There, at the bottom of the stairs was the celebrated little old lady carrying her walking stick and holding a pack of cards. For some strange reason I *wasn't frightened at all* by this apparition. I went up to her and quite calmly asked her, «Will you come in and join me in the sitting room.» She too showed no sign of being disturbed by my casual invitation. «I should be delighted» she replied «and perhaps you could *be persuaded to join me in a game of cards.*» We got on like a house on fire but strange as it may seem, the subject of ghosts or haunting not *wasn't mentioned* and we played one game of cards after the other as if it was the most natural thing in the world. I think I *was dealt* some terrible cards because I kept on losing and in the end my guest was obviously getting bored by the lack of competition. A little later she complained of tiredness and left the room.

When they returned, I told my uncle that the little old lady had made an appearance but I didn't go into the card games and our little chat. He *was overwhelmed* by the news. It changed his life. Till his dying day he regaled all visitors with the story of the ghostly lady and then added with a broad grin, «It is not just me, you know, the story *was verified by my nephew.*»

Well, I did spend a lovely holiday there, they were both very kind to me and no harm *no harm was done*. You see it depended on the way «made an appearance» *is interpreted*. After my vigorous swim I'd sat down in front of the television and fallen asleep and well — I have to confess — I simply dreamt the whole thing.



## 7. Relative pronoun

The story I am about to tell you contains lots of examples of the «Relative Pronoun». Before you read it, look through the following notes:

### General

1. Relative pronouns do two jobs at once:
  - a. acting as subject or object of a verb
  - b. joining two clauses together
2. The most common are: *who*, *whom*, *which* and *that* — *who* and *whom* for people and *which* for things.
3. *Whom* is not used much in conversation and refers to an object of a verb or a preposition.
4. *That* can often replace *whom*, *who* and *which*.
5. After nouns referring to times and places, *when* and *where* can be used to mean at which or *in which* and *why* can be used to mean *for which*.
6. *Whose* is a possessive relative word, referring to people and things.

### Particular

1. Defining and non-defining relative clauses  
Compare:  
«George, *who* lives next door, always watches television.»  
«The couple *who* live next door always watch television.»
2. *That*
  - a. For people and things and in conversation.
  - b. After the following: all, everything, something, anything, nothing, none, little, few, much.
  - c. After superlatives.
3. In defining relative clauses the relative pronoun is often left out if it is the object of the verb.
4. Prepositions can come before the relative pronoun or at the end of the clause but you cannot use *that* or *who* after a preposition.
5. In a non-defining relative clause *that* cannot be used and object relative pronouns cannot be left out.

6. Sentence Relative  
Compare:  
«He showed me a photo *that* upset me.»  
«He tore up the photo, *which* upset me.»
7. Relative and infinitive  
«He was unhappy unless he had someone with *whom* to argue.»
8. *Whose* can refer to people or things and can be the subject of a clause, the object of a verb or the object of a preposition.
9. Instead of *whose*, *of which* can be used.
10. *What*  
Compare:  
«I gave her the money that she needed.»  
«I gave her what she wanted.»

Now read the story and see how many examples of the pronoun you can find.

### Relatives

I hope you know what I'm talking about. I could be talking about «*who*», «*which*», «*whose*» and so on, or I could be talking about aunts, uncles and cousins. That's the trouble with English. One word can have two quite different meanings. Well, in this short piece I'm going to talk about both — that is primarily aunts, uncles and so on and with a bit of luck the other «relatives» should be there too.

Anyhow, there are those members of the family *whom* you regard as part of the family and it never occurs to you that the chap *whom* you call Dave is also someone to *whom* you could give the title «uncle». You know him so well that it never occurs to you that he is in fact a relative. Then there are those *that* you only see on special occasions, *which* don't take place very often like weddings and funerals. In the former you're usually enjoying yourself so much that you don't take much notice of them and in the latter you hardly talk to anyone because it's a time when you don't talk much to anyone and a place *where* you don't normally go out of your way to be sociable.

Then there is that special category of relatives *which* you hardly ever consider and *whose* names you only vaguely remember because they did something terrible or left the country in a hurry or *who* have funny ways which most of us can't accept.

I had one like that, an aunt *whose* name was Enid. In fact whenever I hear the name spoken or read it in a book, I always conjure up in my mind that aunt *who* must have been the strangest member that my family has produced. As a child I had heard stories about her that may or may not have been true. The best one I remember was *when* she ended up in hospital with a broken leg. Apparently she was very proud of her house, *which* she kept in an immaculate condition, and in this particular incident *that* illustrates her eccentricity, she had seen a mess on one of the rugs she kept in her sitting room. As she

was expecting a visitor, *who* was due any minute, she opened the door to the garden and threw out the rug *that* was causing the trouble and *whose* stain was upsetting her. Unfortunately she forgot to get off the rug first and threw herself out into the garden as well. That was *how* she ended up in the hospital with a broken leg. There were endless stories like those, *which* were probably exaggerated and *that* had been added to over the years. Nobody really knew *what* was true and *what* was complete fabrication. The one thing *that* nobody could understand or explain was why she had gone to live in another country *where* she had stayed for more than twenty years. Everybody had something to say on the matter: she had had an unhappy love affair with a man *who* was married, she wanted to make a fresh start in a place *where* no-one knew her, she wanted to get away from her family whom she couldn't put up with. Such stories, *which* grew in number as the years went by, fascinated me. The strange thing was that not one of these stories fitted with the generally accepted belief *that* Aunt Enid was supposed to be a very shy person, *who* wouldn't have the courage to say boo to a goose. This was an enigma *that* I wanted to resolve and when I heard that she was returning to the place where she was born, I hoped I might have the opportunity to meet this living legend and get to the bottom of these stories.

My parents had decided to meet her at the port *where* her ship was due to arrive and I was allowed to go with them. I can still remember the excitement and anticipation I felt as a child waiting for the ship to arrive. My father, *who* was always making fun of Aunt Enid, made some remark to the effect *that* she had probably missed the boat and taken the wrong one to another destination *that* was probably the other side of the world. We waited and then slowly through the mist we saw the ship *whose* right side bore the name «Voyager», *which* I thought was very romantic since it aptly described what my aunt had been doing for the last twenty years. I even imagined that the small dot visible on the deck was Aunt Enid waving to us. But my father pointed out *that* what I thought was Aunt Enid was in fact one of the anchors.

Eventually the «Voyager» docked and as was to be expected the last person to disembark was my celebrated Aunt. I must admit that she was a bit of an anti-climax because she was small, frail, gray-haired, spoke with a tiny crackling voice, *which* sounded like a tiny mouse, and was to all intents and purposes a very ordinary old lady.

It was several weeks before Aunt Enid and I were alone together. In fact it was the afternoon on *which* she was preparing to go back to her home abroad. I had not had enough courage to put the question to her, *which* I had promised myself I would. In a sudden rush of confidence I burst out: «Why did you go and live abroad all those years ago, Aunt Enid?» She smiled that smile for *which* old people are famous, *that* combines compassion with wisdom. «I'll tell you on one condition», she replied «and *that* is that you don't tell a living soul». I promised. As all the «living souls» to *whom* she was referring are now no longer alive, I think it's reasonable to reveal Aunt Enid's secret. Apparently the day on *which* she left home for the last time she had taken a train to visit a friend, *who* didn't live far

away but unfortunately she had fallen asleep, missed the station she wanted and didn't wake up until the train came to the end of the line, *which* happened to be the very port *where* we had met her some weeks before. She decided there and then that she would not put up with any more of the jokes *which* had haunted her all her life and booked a passage on the next ship never finding the courage with *which* to explain the reason for her departure. *What* you might call a RELATIVELY simple explanation.

## 8. Usage of pronouns or «One thing or another»

The ONE thing that the boss couldn't stand was a hint of dishonesty. SOME people believed if you closed a deal by whatever means, then that was acceptable. OTHERS thought that you should always be ethical and play according to the rules. And that's what the boss, Andrew thought. He realised that OTHER people thought he was too traditional and believed he should see the OTHER person's point of view. But Andrew wasn't having ANY of that. If you didn't like his way of working, you could do the OTHER thing and in his mind without ANY doubt that meant you had to leave. And then ONE fine day Andrew was faced with a challenge. ONE of his newly recruited staff had just clinched an amazing deal and she did this all on her own, without ANY help from ANYONE. He had always wanted someone to do something like this. Andrew was delighted until SOMEBODY told him SOMETHING that made him think. The new member of staff hadn't done ANYTHING wrong but she had, as it were, bent the rules. NOBODY knew exactly what she had done but NOBODY doubted that she was very attractive and maybe that had had SOMETHING to do with the deal. Andrew was in a difficult position because without ANY doubt the deal had gone SOME way to rescuing the firm from financial problems in the future. The staff were divided. SOME were on her side, THE OTHERS on his side. Clearly SOMETHING had to be done. Andrew had SOME holiday time, which he hadn't used and he decided this was ONE way out for the moment. Off he went on his holiday not ANYWHERE in particular just SOMEWHERE to get away from it all. By the time he got back he hadn't made ANY decision. Members of staff watched his face each day to see if there was ANY sign – SOMETHING that showed he had made up his mind. As the days went past, NO ONE knew what to say to the woman who was at the heart of the matter. Then one morning it looked as if SOMETHING had happened. There was SOME sort of smile on Andrew's face, which wasn't like ANYTHING ANYONE had seen before. Andrew had made his mind up and was going to get married to SOMEONE. And the SOMEONE was NONE OTHER than the new member of staff.

## 9. Prepositions or «How I got that job»

In this story will find a lot of expressions with *Prepositions*. It is best for you to learn these phrases within a context so you will memorize them more quickly. Each preposition can be used in a lot of different combinations forming many different meanings. Take a look at these examples with the preposition *about*:

- «I think it's *about time* for us to leave.»
- «Our new boss is probably *about 40*.»
- «May I ask you a question *about your family*?»
- «What's this noise *all about*?»
- «*How about* going to the cinema tonight?»
- «What are you going to *do about this situation*?»

As you can see the preposition *about* doesn't make any sense without the context it is used in. That's why you should always learn complete expressions instead of separate words.

Now read the short story and try to work out what the expressions in *italics* mean. (There are a 147 prepositions in the text and only a part of them is in *Italics* to make the story easier to read.)

### «How I got that Job»

*At the time* I was living in a small village about 25 miles from London. That was the advantage *of living* there because you could get to London *in under* half an hour. That was *by train* of course. If you went *by car* it would take *about three times* as long and you would sit in your stationary car *for ages* before you got anywhere especially if you travelled *in the morning rush hour*. The reason why I am giving you this travel information *in detail* is because I had to make a choice between the car and the train.

I had seen an advertisement in a national newspaper, which had *asked for* someone who had some *knowledge of* computing, had worked *at least* for two years in car sales and finally was not *afraid of* travelling *up and down* the motorway to London every day from a place not far from where I lived. It seemed interesting work and was quite *different from* the job I had *at the time*. The interview was to take place *at 10 am on* a Monday morning *in* January.

*Throughout* the weekend I could not make up my mind whether to travel by car or by train. *At the end of* Sunday I had decided it was going to be the car. *In the end* I had convinced myself that this was the best choice because *after all* the job was to do *with cars*.

On the day of the interview I got up at 6 a.m. as I was *terrified of being late*. I usually woke up early because the noise of the traffic as it rattled past my bedroom window was very loud first thing *in* the morning. *On* this particular morning everything seemed strangely silent. I looked *out of* the window and realized why: There was a thick blanket of snow on the road and it was still snowing heavily. I panicked. All my resolution had disappeared. Clearly now I would

have to go *by train*. I telephoned the station and asked what time the next train down to London would be. I was informed that all services had been cancelled. I asked *by whom* they had been cancelled. I never knew the answer *to that question* because I had been *cut off*.

Obviously I would have to *think over* my plans for the day. From my bedroom window I looked *down at* my snow-covered car. That was my last hope. After breakfast I managed to *brush off* all the snow from the car and *by a good stroke of fortune* I managed to get it started *at the third attempt*. I drove *along the road* that led up to the motorway *with a light heart* because everything seemed to be going well. It was almost fun *with the sun* shining through the clouds and the snow gently falling down on to the car. But that feeling did not last long. As I reached the slip road that joined the motorway I saw an enormous queue of cars one behind the other. I realized I was stuck right *in the middle of* a huge traffic jam. *In my mind* I started to go through the qualities that were needed for the job. *Among the requirements* were: ability to work *under pressure*, calmness *in the face of* difficult circumstances and a determination to *see a job through* to the end. I reviewed the situation. It was 9 a.m. *by now* and on a normal day the drive would take about forty-five minutes. On a day like this it would be impossible to gauge. I decided to relax. *After all* nobody else could travel so why should I *worry about* it? Within five minutes the traffic was moving again and for the next two miles I was driving along the motorway *at quite a good speed*.

And then it happened. I *skidded off* the road and *into* the bank *by* the hard shoulder. There was a loud bang and steam started to pour *from out of* the car bonnet. I glanced *at* my watch. It was fifteen minutes *to ten* and there were still about 10 miles to go. Fortunately I had my mobile phone *with me* and called the car assistance firm, who promised to come as soon as possible. I also phoned the firm I was *supposed to* be having an interview with, apologised and said I might be a little late. They didn't sound very friendly. One hour later the repair people arrived but they couldn't start the car. They towed it away to a garage and *dropped me off at* the nearest railway station.

I think I must have got the only train that was running that day. Eventually I reached my destination *at 11.30 a.m.* just one and a half hours late. The interview panel asked me some really difficult questions and as I left to go home, I thought that I had failed miserably. Two days later I received a letter. They offered me the job because I had shown presence of mind and determination». I was feeling very pleased *with myself*. Apparently I had shown ability *above the average* and had scored well *over* any other candidate. It wasn't until I had been there *for three weeks* that I *found out* the truth.

I had been the only candidate who had managed to get to the interview on that snowy day ten years ago.

## 10. Spot the preposition

They are only small in most cases but we would be lost without them! I am referring of course to prepositions and as you can see I've already used four of them - and there goes number five. Literally they are words that go before other words, usually nouns. The problem is deciding which one to use and which one not to use. To help show how some of them are used I have written this short story. As with all new words it is always best to try to remember them in phrases like: by the sea/outside the house/by car/at the table and so on. Hope you enjoy the story:

Our learner was in a terrible state. He knew he wanted to go somewhere but he didn't know how. At this moment he was standing near a bridge. Should he go by bus, by train, by car, by boat or possibly quite simply on foot? He could walk across the bridge, under the bridge but he couldn't possibly jump over the bridge. He just knew he wanted to get out of town. Once he had arrived there by car he could obviously get out of the car or the train or the bus but he'd have to get off the boat. And now he had arrived in the town centre and was sitting inside the tourist office looking out of the window. Well, he couldn't actually see through the window because the glass was very dirty. He left the tourist office and stood outside for a few minutes thinking what to do next. He saw a policeman coming towards him and he thought he'd ask him where to go. But the policeman walked past him and went along the street taking no notice of him. Anyhow when he thought about it, what could a police officer do for him? The trouble was that he didn't speak the language although he had learnt a few phrases by heart. He knew how to say: On what day is there a festival? At what time do the shops shut? Can I put my bike against the wall? None of these questions would be of use to him. What he really wanted to know was: Where is there a hotel? He was on the point of giving up when he saw a wonderful hotel in front of him. He walked up to the reception and within minutes he was sitting in a beautiful bedroom that looked over the sea. He had a fabulous meal in the restaurant and then went back to his room. He got into bed and fell into a deep sleep. It was in the middle of the night that he suddenly realised he wouldn't have enough money to pay for the accommodation. He decided to continue with his sleep and when he woke up he got ready and went down to the restaurant for his breakfast. He didn't leave that hotel for three weeks. That was how long it took for him to pay for that overnight stay by working in the kitchen as a washer up.



## 11. English adverb or «High hopes»

In this story you will see many examples of how adverbs can be used. As you know most adverbs have the ending «ly». For example:

- quickly
- really
- fairly

We use an adverb when we want to describe an activity as in this example:

- They speak English too *quickly* for me.

Please be aware that there are quite a number of adverbs that don't have the ending «ly». Here are some examples:

- fast
- well
- often

As with any grammar rule there are a lot of exceptions and it's really best for you to simply read stories and find the adverbs in *italics*.

So without further ado, let's get straight to the point.

### «High Hopes»

I had a nightmare the other night. I dreamt I was bungee jumping, that's when you throw yourself off a bridge and your feet are attached to an elasticated rope that pulls you back again. I didn't do the jump *properly*, in fact, I did it *extremely badly* because I fell only a few metres and was dangling *dangerously* just below the bridge for ages.

Then I woke up and thanked my lucky stars *enthusiastically* that it had been only a dream. I lay *quietly* in bed the following morning and wondered how I had come to have such a terrible dream. Never would I contemplate the idea of jumping off a bridge with or without an elasticated cord. Then I remembered I had seen a film on the television the night before showing some students bungee jumping. The funny thing about this strange sport is that you often see people jumping off but you never see them come back. As I said, in no circumstances could I be persuaded to do it for the simple reason that I am terrified of heights. I remember once sitting petrified at my desk at work listening to a colleague describing how he had jumped out of a plane by parachute on one occasion in order to raise some money for charity, I can recall how I almost fell off my chair in fear. No sooner had he finished telling his story than I had to get up and go and lie down *quietly* in a darkened room. I can *still* remember one incident that illustrates my fear of heights — I haven't got over it yet and it's still very vivid in my mind.

I *never* have to find an excuse to go the seaside. I always agree to it

when someone suggests going to the coast. I *never* can resist the sight and smell of the sea. A trip had been planned for the weekend. I *always* used to pack the night before one of these trips and *invariably* I *rarely* slept in anticipation of the event. That's what comes of working in a large city day in day out. We set off *early* and reached our destination *quite quickly* at about 11 a.m. *Hardly* had we finished our morning coffee in a small cafe when it started to rain *really heavily*. Then we decided to drive around to the front and watch the sea as it pounded *violently* against the beach. We were *just* going to abandon the whole idea of staying there any longer when the sun made an appearance *suddenly*.

As *quickly* as the rain had started *equally* as *speedily* it stopped. We all got out of the car and walked *slowly* up the cliff at the end of the town. *Usually* you get a magnificent view of the bay at the top but on this particular afternoon *rarely* had I seen so *much* mist. And that, in a manner of speaking, was my down fall. Although I knew this particular piece of land *quite well*, the fog had obscured the edge of the cliff and although I was walking *very slowly* as I *always* do on high ground, I stepped on a piece of grass which I thought was solid but soon discovered was anything but. I slipped *immediately* and began to descend almost as if I was nearly doing a slow motion bungee jump only this time I was the right way up. With a jolt I stopped *abruptly* and realized I was going nowhere. Only then did I start to panic. I could hear the sea but I didn't dare look down and I started to yell as loud as I could. I waited *patiently* on my little edge for at least half an hour while I was being assured that help would come *soon*.

*Eventually* a rope was dropped down to me and I *gradually* hoisted myself up to the top of the cliff. By now the mist had cleared *completely* and I took a quick look down to discover that I had *only* been about half a metre from the beach. But I thought I'd conceal that information *subtly*.

After all, it would have spoilt the hero's welcome I received.

## 12. Types of adverbs

There are several types of *adverb*:

***manner - place - time - frequency - degree.***

There are different places where you can put the *adverb*.

**ADVERBS OF MANNER** - these answer the question how?

This adverb usually comes after the direct object or if there is no direct object, after the verb:

She speaks Italian **beautifully**.

He works **well**.

You must drive your car **carefully**.

Eat **quietly**.

**ADVERBS OF PLACE** - these answer the question where?

This adverb usually comes after the object, otherwise after the verb:

We saw you **there**.

We were sitting **here**.

We looked **everywhere**.

Note: somewhere, anywhere, follow the same rules as some and any:

Have you seen my glasses **anywhere**?

I'm sure I left them **somewhere**.

I can't find them **anywhere**.

**ADVERBS OF TIME** - these answer the question when?

This adverb usually comes either at the very beginning of the sentence or at the end.

**Afterwards** we decided to go by car. I've done that journey before.

**Note: yet** and **still: yet** should be placed at the end of the sentence.

**Still** should be placed before the verb, except with the verb 'to be' when it comes after.

We haven't started **yet**.

He **still** wears old-fashioned clothes.

She is **still** a student.

Compare these two sentences:

The train **still** hasn't arrived.

The train hasn't arrived **yet**.

**ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY** - these answer the question how many times?

This adverb comes after the verb 'to be':

She is **always** honest.

Comes before simple tenses of all other verbs:

They **sometimes** spend the whole of Saturday fishing.

Comes after the first auxiliary in a tense consisting of more than one verb:

I have **often** wondered how they did that.

I can **sometimes** go without food for days.

**Note:** with 'used to' and 'have' the frequency adverb is usually placed in front:

We **always** used to look forward to the school holidays.

He **never** has any trouble with his old car.

**ADVERBS OF DEGREE** - these answer the question to what extent?

This adverb can modify an adverb or an adjective and comes before the word it modifies:

The bottle is almost full, nearly empty.

They should be able to pass their exams quite easily.

The following adverbs of degree can also modify verbs:

**almost, nearly, quite, hardly, scarcely, barely, just**

They follow the same pattern as frequency adverbs in terms of where they are placed:

I **quite** understand.

We had **almost** reached the hut when the rain started.

I am **just** beginning a new course.

### **INVERSION**

If you begin a sentence with one of the following, the normal word order changes - the verb comes first followed by the subject:

**never, seldom, scarcely ..... when, no sooner ..... than,  
nowhere, in no circumstances, on no account, only then, not  
only**

**Seldom** has one century seen so many changes.

**No sooner** did we hear the results when there was a knock at the door.

**Never** would I be persuaded to buy a secondhand car.

Usual word order with different adverbs: **MANNER PLACE TIME**

She sang **beautifully in the concert hall last night.**

### 13. Indirect speech or «Say it again»

Indirect Speech (also known as Reported Speech) refers to a sentence reporting what someone has said. It is almost always used in spoken English.

If the reporting verb (i.e. *said*) is in the past, the reported clause will be in a past form. This form is usually one step back into the past from the original.

For example:

- She said her job *was* interesting.
- She said she *went* to the library each day.
- Our new colleague said he *spoke* French every day.

If simple present, present perfect or the future is used in the reporting verb (i.e. *says*) the tense is retained. For example:

- She says that her job *is* interesting.
- She says that she *goes* to the library each day.
- Our new colleague will say that he *speaks* French every day.

If reporting a general truth the present tense will be retained or even the future tenses can be used. For example:

- She said that her country *is* very beautiful.
- They said that trust *is* vital for any business.
- My wife said that she *will* always *love* me no matter what.

Now read the following story and find the indirect speech expressions in *italics*.

#### «Say it again»

«I'm just popping out to put the car away in the garage. I've left it in the road.» — I told my wife that I *just was popping out* to put the car away in the garage as I had left it in the road. «You be careful. Remember you've had a lot to drink and the police are having a particular purge at the moment in drink driving.» — She told me to be careful and reminded me that I *had* a lot to drink and that the police have a particular purge at the time on drink driving. She is very law-abiding, my wife.

I shut the front door and as I walked down the garden path, I noticed someone standing by the car. It was a policeman. «Very pleasant weather for the time of year.» — He pointed out the

pleasantness of the weather for the time of year. «Oh er - yes. Absolutely». I hesitated and agreed wholeheartedly. «Is this your car, sir». — He asked me whether it was my car.

«Yes, indeed» I affirmed confidently. «Don't see many of this particular make often. I've sometimes thought of buying one myself.» — He reckoned that you *did not often* see many of that particular make. He sometimes thought of buying one himself. «Oh, really». I expressed interest in his comment.

«What is this man up to? Is he trying to lure me into starting up the car so that he can then breathalze me?» — I asked myself what that man was up to and wondered whether he was trying to lure me into starting up the car so that he could then breathalyze me. «But then I doubt I could afford it. Cost a fair amount, I expect?» — Then he doubted whether he *could afford* it and conjectured that it had to cost a fair amount. «I picked it up quite cheaply actually. It has done a lot of miles, you see.» — I explained that I *had it picked up* quite cheaply because it *had done* a lot of miles. The man was beginning to get on my nerves. Why didn't he just arrest me for intent to drive a motor car while under the influence of drink?

The next question seemed a bit fatuous as I was clutching my car keys at the time. «Going for a spin, sir?» — He asked me whether I *was going* for a spin and I didn't like the way he emphasized the word spin. «No, I'm just going to put the car in the garage.» — I denied this and pointed out that I was just going to put the car in the garage. «Don't let me hold you up. I'm just waiting around to catch the odd speeding motorist and anyone who's had a bit too many, ha ha.» — He told me not to let him hold me up and went on to say that he *was just waiting around* to catch the odd speeding motorist and then added with a chuckle anyone who *had had* too much to drink.

I couldn't hesitate any longer and got into the car and switched on the engine. «Just a minute, sir.» — The policeman asked me politely to stop for a minute. The voice of my conscience spoke: «He's got you now and you've fallen right into the trap.» — He *had got* me now and I *had fallen* right into the trap. «What's the matter?» — I asked what the matter *was*.

«Let me just see that the road's clear for you.» — He asked me to let him see the road *was* clear. It was and so was I. I breathed a sigh of relief, drove the car into the garage and shut the door. As I turned to go into the house, I was aware of the policeman. He put his hand into his pocket. I assumed that the moment of truth had arrived. Out came his handkerchief, after all even policemen have to blow their noses. «What does he want, now?» — I asked myself what he *was going to do* next. «It is my duty to point out to you, sir» — it was his duty to point out to me that I *drove* a car under the influence? No. He just wanted to point out that one of my brake lights had gone and suggested I put it right as soon as possible.

I needed a drink.

## 14. Conjunctions or «Joined up writing»

If you want to be rude about somebody's ability to express themselves and indicate that they can't say more than one complete sentence at a time, then you could say: they can't even string two sentences together. Now, string together is a sort of knitting expression suggesting that different parts of a material you're making are attached one to the other. Mind you, there's nothing wrong with short simple sentences all in a row. They can be appealing but sometimes you want to expand your ideas and that's when you make use of the joining words, called «conjunctions». They come in different shapes and sizes with of course different meanings and uses. They start small like «and», «but» and «as» growing into the larger varieties like «though» and «although».

Now about 600 years before the birth of Jesus Christ a man called Aesop was born in Greece. He started life in very poor circumstances but because he was very clever and could often see answers to problems that other people couldn't solve, he became a sort of adviser to the ruler and in his spare time dashed off some very memorable fables. The stories often depict animals as the main characters and they all have a moral purpose. Let's take the one called The Ant and the Dove. In the story I'm going to use conjunctions, which I shall write in CAPITAL letters:

One day an ant was strolling beside a river AND he was feeling very thirsty BECAUSE it was very hot. He was sure that there was a river nearby AS he had been in this place before. ALTHOUGH his legs were very small he ran as fast as he could UNTIL he reached the riverbank. He raced up to the edge of the water BUT in his haste he went too quickly AND fell into the water. SINCE his mother had never taught him to swim, he was in great danger of drowning. WHILE this drama with our friend was taking place, a dove was sitting on a branch over the river. The dove realised that UNLESS he did something quickly, the ant would not survive. EVEN IF he tried, the dove knew he couldn't dive in and save the ant. Suddenly he did something brilliant IN ORDER THAT the ant could escape. He picked a leaf from the tree AND dropped it into the water SO THAT the ant could climb on to it AND float to safety. WHEN the ant was next in the area some days later, he saw a man with a net, who wanted to catch his friend, the dove. AFTER the ant had thought about how to help the dove, he decided to take immediate action. IN SITE OF THE FACT that the ant was very small, he was able to give someone a nasty bite. The ant thought he could bite the man in the hand BUT that meant a long journey OR he could bite his foot. IF he did that immediately, his plan might work SO he gave the man a really good bite. The man let out a scream AND dropped the net. WHEREAS the man had tried to be quiet in catching the bird, the noise he made warned the dove who flew away to safety.

The moral of the story is: IF you help someone, they will also help you.



## 15. Conditionals or «On condition»

This story is a review of the Conditionals. As you remember there are 4 types of conditional. Can you identify them in the following sentences?

- If you *squeeze* an icicle in your hands it *melts*.
- If it *rains* tomorrow we *will stay* at home.
- If I *were* a millionaire I *would share* the money with you.
- If you *hadn't called* me last night I *would have slept* peacefully.

Now read the story and try to find out which of the conditionals are in *italics* and why.

### «On Condition»

If someone *had told* me when I was at school, I *would not have believed* it. If I *tell* people today, they *say* they have not heard of it. Of course it was a long time ago. But it is true: if you *were* 18, you *had to* do something called national service. If you *were* reasonably fit — *could* stand up, walk about, sit down and then stand up again and not fall over — you *would have to* report to a military barracks near where you lived. If I *had taken* the trouble to think about the practical side of the matter, I *could have chosen* a different service. There were after all the navy and the airforce. The navy wasn't very likely unless you *had had* dozens of uncles and grandparents in the service before you. In my case this didn't apply at all. The airforce somehow appealed. I liked the idea of tearing through the skies away from it all. If I *think* about it now, I just *can't imagine* why I liked the idea especially since flying for me today is a total nightmare. It probably came from Great Aunt Mary - she wasn't that big but she had acquired the title «great» because she'd been alive for so long. Anyhow she used to say: «If you really *do* your national service, you'll probably *be* a pilot. I can just see you sitting in a nice aeroplane.» Of course if you *objected* to any type of violence against your fellow man, you *could* always *object* — officially I mean. If you *thought* along those lines, you *were* called a «conscientious objector» and you *had to* appear before a special tribunal and explain your reasons. Again you *would* probably *be* exempt from military service if you *came* from a long line of conscientious objectors. In that case you *would work* in a hospital for two years as a porter. But then my family didn't do a lot of objecting. I came from an ancestral background who generally agreed with the majority. We didn't like to make a fuss. The general philosophy that prevailed was: «If I *were* you dear, I'd get on with it.» On top of that I wasn't very conscientious either. We had a black sheep in the family of course. He telephoned me shortly before my 18th birthday and said: «If you really *want to* get out of doing national service, I'll *help* you all I can. If I *were* you, I'd *do* what I'm doing.» His idea was to live abroad

until he was 26 and then come home. It seemed a bit extreme to me. If *he'd known* what happened in the end, he *would have done* it here because he got caught for military service in the other country where he was living!

For those few months after I was 18 I was like a cat on a hot tin roof. If the telephone *rang*, I *would jump* in the air. If the postman *arrived* late, I *couldn't relax* until he had delivered the post and I had checked every item. My parents said to me one morning: «If you don't *relax*, you'll *end up* having a nervous break down. If the post *does come*, there's, nothing you can do about it. If I *were*, you ... » but I didn't listen to the rest of the sentence because a thought had come into my mind. Supposing I *were*, mad, supposing I *didn't know*, who I was, supposing I *pretended*, that I didn't understand a word anybody was saying - surely the Queen *wouldn't want*, a madman in her army. I tried it for a few days but it was too much like hard work. You can imagine the comments: «If *you're*, trying to get out of conscription by pretending to be barmy, just *forget*, it because it isn't working ... if you honestly *imagine*, that your mother and I are taken in by this stupid behaviour then you *are*, very much mistaken. I can only repeat if I *were* you ...» Time passed slowly and I began to think that if I kept quiet about it, maybe the army *would forget* about me.

One bright autumn day in September after a particularly good night's sleep I strolled downstairs and saw what I took to be a postcard. A card from a late holiday maker perhaps? It wasn't. It was a card informing me that I had to report to H.M. Tower of London and giving me permission to travel there by underground - one-way only of course. And that's how I came to spend the first part of my national service in the Tower. Nobody now believes me if I *tell* them I was there for three months but then I still *have* the emotional scars to prove it. They tell me that if you *want to* visit the Tower as a tourist nowadays, it *is* quite expensive. I haven't been back. I think three months *is* long enough if you *want to* get to know a place. There are other places of interest near the City of London. Now, if I *were* you...

## 16. Subjunctive or «Wishful thinking»

What on earth is the «Subjunctive»? In many languages all the verb endings change and you have to learn them as if you are using a completely different tense. Now in English you'll be pleased to know that we've simplified it to such an extent that it has almost disappeared.

Take the Present Subjunctive. You only really notice it in the 3rd person singular and it is used in expressions of wishing, hoping and praying. So we say «Long live the Queen«! which means in effect that we wish that the Queen will live a long time and the word «live», technically is the 3rd person singular of the Present Subjunctive and has no «s». But if I say «I hope you live to be 100 years old», that is the 2nd person singular of the Present Subjunctive but it is exactly the same in appearance as the 2nd person singular of the Present Simple. So, who says English is difficult!

Then again you'd hardly notice the Past Subjunctive because it's the same in form as the Past Simple and you find it most often in conditional sentences like this: «If I won the lottery, I'd buy a big house.» «Won» is technically here the Past Subjunctive but surprise, surprise, it's the same as the Past Simple — wonderful. The only time you can spot it is in the verb «be» in expressions like: «If I were you ...»

But today people are beginning to say as well: «If I was you» There is also occasional use of the Present Subjunctive of the verb «be» and the word is «be» in a sentence like «If this be true.» but again you're more likely to hear/read: «If this is true.» As I say we like to keep things simple. Another example of the Past Subjunctive is in expressions like: «It's high time we left.» which means in effect: «The time has come when we should leave.»

Incidentally you can show off that you know the subjunctive and also use a very convenient expression when you want to leave someone's house because either you're bored or you simply want to go home. Everyone will be so impressed with your knowledge of idiomatic English, that they can't possibly be offended. So that's the subjunctive in a nutshell. What I say is: «Long live English!»

Now I want you to read a little story I wrote and I would like you to try and find as many examples of the subjunctive as you can:

### «Wishful Thinking»

Heaven help him, I thought when I saw the news item in my local paper that a young man in the area had won millions on the national lottery. It wasn't envy. I honestly felt sorry for him. To win thousands would be fine, but millions could be too much to handle. If need be, I supposed he could give it all away but then that would probably be worse than never having won the money in the first place. If only something like that were to happen to me, I said to

myself. Now, I should have the maturity to know precisely what to do. It was high time I had a piece of luck. With these philosophical thoughts turning round in my mind I picked up my daily newspaper. They too ran a sort of lottery and if you had a scratch card with two sums of money the same as the one in the paper, then you won that amount. «Saints preserve us!», I yelled at the top of my voice, although I was alone at the time. Yes, you've guessed it. I had won £250,00. I went cold and found myself quoting Shakespeare: «If this be error and upon me proved ...» I forgot the rest of the line. I was too excited.

Naturally I phoned everyone up and told them the news and I received plenty of advice. Someone suggested a financial plan should be drawn up to assess the different possible investments. Another proposed that I went straight to the bank for advice. A third insisted I did nothing until he had had time to consider what to do. I was seriously beginning to wonder who had won the money. The best advice came from the person who recommended that I should go out and enjoy myself. The trouble was that everyone reacted as if they knew everything about money and I hadn't the least idea. It seemed to me that I was being treated as if I were a complete fool.

Meanwhile I had to be sensible and take some practical steps in order to get hold of the money. It was time I stopped daydreaming and read the rules on the back of my scratch card. Either they would send you the cheque for the amount after you had sent them the appropriate card or you could actually go round to their main office and do the paperwork there. I thought I would sooner go round to the office. I felt I would rather get the matter sorted out at the headquarters. The first thing you were instructed to do was to ring a certain telephone number. I tried and the number was engaged. Throughout the rest of that Wednesday I tried phoning again and again and the number was either engaged or nobody answered. It was as if they knew about me and didn't want to part with the money. I just wished they had picked up the phone. I knew that the office closed at 5.30 and so I made one last desperate phone call at 5.15. A young woman answered who sounded as though she knew what she was talking about. I tried hard to sound as if I were in charge of the situation and as if winning £250,000 was the sort of thing that happened every day. My throat was very dry and she asked me to repeat what I had just said. I explained that the amounts on the Wednesday's scratch card were the same as that day's paper and I claimed that sum. There was a long pause and then as politely as she could she suggested I looked at the day on today's paper. «Heaven help me», I cried, «it's Thursday.»

## 17. Reflections

In Greek mythology Narcissus looked into the water of the pool and saw his own reflection. In other words he saw *himself* — he saw a reflection of *himself*. Both those words that I have highlighted are called *reflexive* pronouns and in both cases the subject and the object are the same just like the reflection of Narcissus. But we'll come back to that later. Let's do some more reflecting or thinking. A reflection, apart from being another picture of someone or something as in the case of our Greek friend, who incidentally died gazing at his reflection in the pool, is also another word for a considered thought or coming back to think about something again. If you are writing an account of your childhood for example and you are thinking back to that time, you could call this description; «Reflections of my childhood.» Again if you think that crime occurs because of the type of society in which people live, you could say that «The increase in crime in cities is a sad reflection of the poor conditions in which some people live.» In these examples you can see that one thing is a sort of representation of another. In fact the older spelling of «reflection» was «reflexion» and we also find «reflective» and «reflexive». The former means «thinking seriously about» — you can be described as «in a reflective mood» when you are deep in thought about has happened. The latter of course brings us back to the pronoun.

Let me show the forms of the reflexive pronoun in tabular form using the same sentence:

- *I saw myself* on the TV news last night.
- *You saw yourself* on the TV news last night.
- *He saw himself* on the TV news last night.
- *She saw herself* on the TV news last night.
- *It saw itself* on the TV news last night. (Let's imagine the «it» here refers to the dog!)
- *We saw ourselves* on the TV news last night.
- *You saw yourselves* (plural) on the TV news last night.
- *They saw themselves* on the TV news last night.

Two points to note in particular: «you» as a personal pronoun does not change when it becomes plural but it does in the reflexive pronoun: the spelling of the third person plural — themselves.

Take a look at these two sentences, both of which contain the word «himself» but in each sentence the word has a different meaning:  
Narcissus himself saw it in the water.  
Narcissus saw himself in the water.

In the second sentence the meaning is that Narcissus saw a

reflection of himself in the water but in the first sentence the meaning is that Narcissus and nobody else saw it in the water. When it has that meaning we call the pronoun an *emphatic* pronoun but the form in singular and plural and all the «persons» is exactly the same as with the *reflexive* pronoun. The important thing about the emphatic pronoun is that it is not used always with transitive verbs and obviously is not used with sentences where the subject and object are the same. Now let's put all that into a very short and simple narrative and try and find which are emphatic and which are reflexive pronouns: Imagine a young man at a party who is very *full of himself* and who is talking to another person whose back is *itself* facing a mirror:

Personally I *myself* have always prided *myself* on being able to look after *myself* in whatever situation I happen to find *myself*. My father *himself* always taught me to take decisions. «You should make your own mind up *yourself* and let other people get on with things by *themselves*.» Those are the very words *themselves* that he used. I don't know what you *yourself* do. I mean we are all supposed to try and make the best of *ourselves*. I guess or I imagine from what you *yourself* look like that you have a reasonable job. I don't imagine that you earn as much as I *myself* do. I assume that you and your family are *yourselves* struggling to pay the rent or the mortgage? What exactly do you *yourself* do for a living?' For a moment the pompous young man turned round on *himself*. When he turned back he found *himself* staring at *himself* in the mirror. The other 'self' had slipped away and was now enjoying *herself* in another part of the room talking to a young man who was looking very pleased with *himself*.

## 18. Start or begin?

Where shall we start? Where shall we begin? Shall we begin at the start, start at the beginning, start at the start or even begin at the beginning? That last one was good enough for the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas in his famous play for voices, *Under Milk Wood* first broadcast in February 1954 a few weeks after the poet's death. The actor Richard Burton intoned the lines:

«To begin at the beginning: It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black...» The two verbs «start» and «begin» are like so many couples in the English language a really troublesome pair because of the problem of choosing the right one for the appropriate use and occasion. Take these two sentences for example:

«I've started to learn English and I've begun to learn English». Which one would you choose? Well, I have a theory about these verbs which I want to try out in order to test its validity. The difference really lies in the nature of the two words. «Begin» has a sense of leisure and «start» has the idea of urgency. They both obviously indicate the idea of commencing — don't ask me to explain that word's relationship with the pair, suffice it to say that it covers both meanings — but there is a difference in interpretation. «Start» gives the idea of suddenness. In fact if you were sitting in a room and say half asleep and you were unaware that there was anybody else there, you would say if you unexpectedly heard or saw them:

«Oh, you did give me a start» or as an extension of the verb: «You startled me». Then again you could say: «My car starts straightaway in the morning». If you said: «My car begins in the morning», people would wonder what it was going to do next. As a further use you could look at the English translation of the Bible and go to the New Testament John 1:1, to read:

«In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God». It would be ludicrous here to use the word «start». If you want to get on with a meeting because nobody is paying attention, you might say:

«Shall we start?» And thus indicate that there is a lot to do and time is important. «Shall we begin?» is much more relaxed. There is a sort of uniqueness in idea behind the verb «start» as if it hasn't happened before, take these two sentences for example:

«Charlie (baby) started speaking at the age of two and Charlie (chairman) began speaking at two o'clock». Back to my original question concerning the learning of English. «I've started to learn English» suggests possibly «I have to for my job» or «I've thought about it for a long time and now decided the time is right». Whereas «I've begun to learn English» gives the idea that you've taken up this as a hobby and it might be of interest to other people.

If you had to give the two verbs a personality, you might well

describe start as «impetuous, decisive and efficient». Begin can perhaps be described as «relaxed, unhurried and good-natured». And that's probably where I'll have to finish or should I say «end»? Now there's yet another irritating pair that I'll have to go into another time...



## 19. Make or do? or «Doing time»

In this story you will see many examples of how the two Phrasal Verbs *make* and *do* can be used. Both verbs are often confused as they can be very similar in meaning. Please compare the following two sentences:

«They do a very good lunch at this restaurant.» — «Have you made dinner yet, darling?»

The first sentence describes an activity that takes place on a regular basis:

«They do (offer) a good lunch every day in this restaurant.»

The second sentence focuses on a one time situation:

«Have you made dinner yet?»

*Make* and *do* are Phrasal Verbs which means they can have a great variety of meanings and often you simply have to learn these phrases.

Now read the short story and try to work out what the expression in *italics* mean.

### «Doing Time»

There is nothing worse than *making a mistake* in public. If you *make one* in private, that's not so bad. Unfortunately I did it in public, *made a mistake* I mean. And it all had to do both with my car and also with my very bad sense of direction.

I just do not remember which direction I have taken before I go into a building. When I come out, I *make a complete fool of myself* because I am not sure whether to turn right or left. In the end I *make the best of it* and do what I can without *making a fuss* and just keep walking. A situation like this of course *doesn't do any harm* to anyone and with a bit of luck I *make it back* to the place where I started from before *the day is done*. But then there are other times when you *make the wrong decision* and then you run the risk of *doing time* for your actions. You can easily *make someone angry* if you don't *do the right thing*. Take what happened last week. I really *did it* that day. It was a beautifully sunny morning and I had been *doing about 60-70 miles an hour* on the motorway on my way to buy a desk at a special shop where they *did special designs* and *made wonderful pieces* of furniture.

Fortunately there was a large car park. The difficulty for me was that it was enormous and there did not seem to be any room left so I had to *make for the back*, which was a long way from the shop. By the time I had reached the entrance, I felt quite exhausted and as they *did a good lunch* there, I decided to eat first and at the same time *do my homework* and look through the catalogue in order to *make the*

*right choice*. The man who owned the shop and the adjoining small factory had once designed a piece of furniture for a member of the Royal Family and *that had made him*. He *did a fair price* nevertheless and once I had seen the display of all the desks available, I quickly *made my mind up* and chose the one that I thought would *do for* my small study. As it happened, this particular model was available to take away then and there and in no time at all I had *done the necessary* and was pushing my new desk back to the car park on a large trolley. Finding the car park was the easy bit. The problem was to try and recall where I had left the car, a large green estate that badly needed a wash.

It was very hard work negotiating up and down the rows of cars and I *made a face* at one driver who seemed determined to *do for me* but then to be honest I hadn't *made it easy* for him because I wasn't visible behind the desk. At long last I saw my big dusty green car waiting patiently by the hedge where I had left it. As I came closer, I was surprised to see a man with very long hair walking round the car and, I thought, *making an attempt* to break into it. I decided not to panic, slowed right down and *made* as little *noise* as possible. Within a few feet of the car I shouted out, «What do you think you're doing?» but my words could not really be *made out* above the noise of the desk sliding off the trolley and stopping within inches of the car. As I bent down to rescue it, I caught sight of the number plate and realized *I had done it again*. It wasn't my car and the «car thief» turned out to be the actual furniture designer himself.

I *made my apologies* and explained that I had mistaken his car for mine. Fortunately, Mike, as he asked me to call him, thought the whole thing was a good joke and *made light of the matter*. He insisted I come back to the workroom in order that he could *make good the damage* that had been *done to* the desk when it fell off the trolley. By the time Mike's staff had *done the necessary repairs*, it was quite late and that's what *made* finding the car *easy*.

You see, mine was the only one left in the car park.

### Vocabulary Explanations

- *making a mistake*  
If you make a mistake you do something wrong.
- *make a complete fool of myself*  
If you make a fool of yourself you do something stupid so that other people **laugh** at you and ridicule you.
- *make the best of it*  
If you make the best of something you do everything to **exploit** the situation to your **best advantage**.
- *making a fuss*  
You make a fuss about something if you are dissatisfied with a situation and you **complain** about it.

- *doesn't do any harm*  
If you do harm to a person you **hurt** or even **injure** them. If you do harm to something you damage it.
- *make it back*  
If you make it back you manage to **find** your **way** back to the point where you started from.
- *the day is done*  
When your day is done you should be **finished** with your work and relax.
- *make the wrong decision*  
If you make the wrong decision you don't **choose** the best **option**.
- *doing time*  
If you do time you are being **punished** for doing something wrong. The expression was originally used to describe criminals who are serving a sentence in prison.
- *make someone angry*  
If you make someone angry you do something that the person **doesn't like** at all.
- *do the right thing*  
If you do the right thing you **do** what you think is **best** in a particular situation.
- *I really did it that day*  
This expression is used when you do something very **stupid**.
- *doing about 60-70 miles an hour*  
If you do 60-70 miles an hour you are driving your car at a **speed** of 60-70 an hour.
- *made wonderful pieces of furniture*  
**Produced** wonderful furniture.
- *make for the back*  
If you make for a place you **move towards** it, usually rather hurriedly.
- *did a good lunch*  
If you go to a restaurant because the food there always **tastes good** you can use this expression.
- *do my homework*  
If you do your homework, you **prepare** yourself in advance.
- *make the right choice*  
If you make the choice you **select** the best option. This expression is the opposite to *make the wrong decision*.

- *that had made him*  
If you manage to do a very good job **establishing a name** for yourself and your services, you can use this expression.
- *did a fair price*  
If a shop or store **always** offers its products at a fair price you can say They do a fair price.
- *made my mind up*  
When you think about your **options** and then **select** one of them you make your mind up.
- *do for*  
It will be **enough**.
- *done the necessary*  
This usually means that you **pay** the bill, pay for the service.
- *made a face*  
To make a **grimace**.
- *do for me*  
If someone wants to do for you, you should run away from them as fast as you can because this means, they want to **kill** you.
- *made it easy*  
If you **help** a person achieve their goal you make it easy for them.
- *making an attempt*  
If you **try** doing something you make an attempt.
- *made as little noise as possible*  
You try to be very **silent**.
- *made out*  
If you can not **hear** or understand what a person says because it is so noisy you can not make it out.
- *I had done it again*  
If you have repeated a stupid **mistake** you can say «I have done it again».
- *I made my apologies*  
If you say **sorry** you make your apologies.
- *made light of the matter*  
If you accept an unpleasant situation **lightheartedly** and don't complain you make light of the matter.
- *make good the damage*  
If you **repair** or mend something that has been broken you make good the damage.

## 20. Phrasal verb break or «Breaking up»

As you already know, phrasal verbs are an essential part of the language. They are also and I don't really need to tell you this, very difficult to guess the meaning of. Occasionally the same phrasal verb can have two different meanings. Take the verb break and the two meanings of break into. Someone who breaks into your house is called a burglar but you could also say: It's very difficult to break into journalism, meaning it is very difficult to get into a career in journalism. The same is true of break up. It can mean make into small pieces as in break up a bar of chocolate to give a piece to several people. And it can also mean that people especially a couple are no longer together if they are described as having broken up. And it's on that theme I have written a short story about two young lovers who apparently have decided to break up and not get married. Read the story and see what happens and also all the other phrasal verbs you can make from break:

### «Breaking up»

Locally they were known as Romeo and Juliet in the small village where they had lived all their lives. Actually they were Dave Owen and Maggie Stevens. It was generally assumed they would get married as they had been inseparable since they were children. When therefore the news broke out in the local pub, appropriately called the Lovers Arms, that they were breaking up, nobody could believe it. After all they had been engaged for five years. Old Mrs. Swenderbin, the celebrated cake maker who had been commissioned to make the wedding cake, broke down and wept openly when she heard about it. No-one was quite sure whether this was through sadness or at the thought of losing the cake commission. Everyone was talking about it wherever you went in the village, the pub, the shops, the park - everywhere. It wouldn't have been a surprise to anyone if the announcer on the radio had suddenly broken into the middle of a piece of music and informed the nation that Dave and Maggie had broken off their engagement. It still remained a mystery why it had happened. There was a wall of secrecy surrounding the whole affair which it was virtually impossible to break through. One reporter on the local paper however was determined to break down the barriers and get to the bottom of the matter.

Andrew had known the couple since schooldays and hadn't been long as a reporter but had already made himself a name by discovering things that the rest of the reporters would never have found out mainly because they would never break with tradition and use the unconventional methods Andrew employed. There was the occasion when Andrew caught a burglar breaking into the local bank. He had had a tip-off about the burglary and had managed to persuade the local manager to let him spend the night in the bank so that he could get pictures of the man actually as he broke in. Then there was the time he had actually got a picture of a man breaking out of a prison situated about ten miles away. The editor had tried in vain to break Andrew of his unconventional habits but gave up because in the end he realised his stories helped sell the paper. On this occasion too he

had made up his mind to break away from the others who were simply asking the members of the two families polite questions. He devised a plan which he was sure would work.

Christmas was approaching and the schoolchildren had broken up for the holidays and this gave Andrew an ideal opportunity to talk to Maggie's younger brother to find out what the two families were doing on Christmas Day. As usual they would spend Christmas together but the unhappy couple were not going to talk to each other. On Christmas evening Andrew dressed up in a Father Christmas outfit broke in upon their festivities, succeeded in making everyone laugh and after a few drinks Dave divulged the reason for the break-up. As always in these situations, the explanation was very simple: Maggie had accused him of being a coward because he had refused to take part in a charity parachute jump. In all honesty Dave broke out in a sweat at the very idea of jumping but had stuck to his guns and declined the offer. Being called a coward was just the last straw and it was he who had broken off the engagement.

Armed with this information together with Dave's help Andrew put his plan into action. Now, it so happened that Maggie owned a horse which had been broken in but was still a bit wild. Early next day, Boxing Day just as the sun was breaking out, a loud bang was heard at the back of Maggie's house apparently near the stable. As everyone was very sleepy, little notice was taken. Within an hour Andrew was banging on the family house asking for Maggie. He told her that her favourite horse had broken out of its stable and run away but Dave fearlessly had rescued it from drowning in the river with waves breaking over him and was on his way back with the animal. Miraculously Dave now earned himself the title hero instead of coward and the wedding was on again. Joy broke out in the village at the news and the local paper was full of the story together with graphic pictures of the rescue. The editor broke off talking at a meeting to congratulate Andrew on another scoop. Mrs. Swenderbin was delighted too and resumed collecting ingredients for the cake.

## 21. Expressions with break or «Have a break!»

There's a television advertisement about a chocolate biscuit called Kit Kat that has been running now for some years. It's a confection consisting of thin bars of chocolate-covered biscuit joined together. The slogan is: «Have a break — Have a Kit Kat». When the words have finished, you hear a snapping sound as a piece of the biscuit is broken. So «Have a break» in this sense means not only relax but also break off something. Break in fact is a very versatile word in its different aspects of verb and noun. At this time of the year many of us take a break — have a holiday — and of course around this period most of the schools «break up» — close for the holidays.

Of course in the old days the «annual break» (yearly holiday) was the conventional bucket and spade type by the seaside. And in the small island of Britain there's plenty of choice with hundreds of miles of coast from the luxurious 5 star hotel to the humble bed and breakfast. And there we go again — «break fast» — when we stop the so-called «fast» (having no food) during the night and then start eating again. Today most of us «break with» (no longer follow) this tradition and travel to exotic places hoping we won't be «breaking the bank» (spending more than we can really afford) in order to do so. While you're away you hope that nobody will «break into» (burgle) your house. If you're travelling by car, you hope that your car won't «break down» (stop working) as you set off on your long journey at the «break of day» (dawn).

Another occurrence at this time of the year is the constant phone calls «breaking the news» (announcing) that you have won a fabulous holiday. You are invited to «break off» (stop) doing what you had planned for your holidays and come along to a presentation at a local hotel. So we decided to «break the habit» of a life time (do something we had never done before) and go along and listen to what this holiday company had to offer. When we arrived, we were offered a drink to «break the ice» (make the occasion more relaxing) as it were and the sat down to see what happened next. Well the first half was quite interesting but after the «break» (interval) it started to get very serious. What we had thought would be free, turned out to cost more and more and if you did accept their scheme, you would quite honestly be lucky to «break even» (not lose any money). As the speakers continued their presentation, we became increasingly bored, checked to see which exit was free and «made a break for it» (made an attempt to escape) but were stopped by one of the staff, who tried very hard to persuade us to stay but we broke in on (interrupted) his little speech, said we were not well and got away.

So we've decided to «go for a short break» (quick holiday) the other side of the channel. Just think all those thousands of years ago if what is mainland Britain hadn't broken off from (become separated from) what is mainland Europe, I could actually drive all the way without having to cross the channel by boat but then of course we wouldn't have a south coast. I don't like the idea of the channel because I like to see where I'm going! The place we've chosen is

very remote and apparently there's a prison nearby and also a large marsh area so we're hoping that there won't be a «breakout» (escape of prisoners) from the prison or an «outbreak» (sudden appearance of) of marsh fever. And now I must «break off» (stop writing) because I understand there's a man offering another free holiday on the phone and I'm just in the right mood to «break someone's neck» (murder someone) — that is if you can physically and legally do that on the telephone!



## 22. Phrasal verb bring or «Upbringing»

In this story you will see many examples of what are called *Phrasal Verbs*. These are simply verbs that consist of two parts — the verb + a preposition.

Our current story focuses on the verb *bring* used with different prepositions. Let me tell you the meaning of one of them — *bring up*. The simple verb *bring* usually means to take something or someone with you as in these sentences:

«Don't forget to bring your passport when you come to the airport.»  
«Please bring a friend when you come to the party tonight.»

When you add a preposition to *bring*, you create a new verb and a new meaning. *Bring up*, means *to educate a child and look after it until is an adult*. Look at this sentence:

«Charlie's parents were killed in a road accident and so he was brought up by his aunt and uncle.»

Now read the short story and try to work out what the phrasal verbs mean.

### «Upbringing»

Sheila Hammond was only twenty-three when she was elected as a Member of Parliament, the youngest woman member in its whole history. Naturally the press showed a great interest in her and her family, invariably asking her how she had managed to be elected at such a young age. Her answer never altered. She owed it all to the way she had been *brought up* by her mother, Mary. Her father had died of a heart attack when she was only two after his business had been *brought down* following a financial scandal. Criminal charges had been *brought against* him but the matter was closed on his death. The press decided to *bring up* this information without being able to get at the truth thanks to Mary's skillful management. In fact during the election as Sheila went round from house to house canvassing, Mary would always *bring up the rear*. It was difficult sometimes to work out who was standing for Parliament, Sheila or Mary. Her mother had observed early on that Sheila was very good at defending herself and always arguing her case well, which had decided her to *bring* her daughter *on* in the art of public speaking. The awareness that Sheila had had all her life about her father's apparent «disgrace» *brought her up against* the necessity constantly to be on her guard. Sheila had never really explained what her father had done. All she would hint at was that the whole business had *brought shame on* the family name, although her father was totally innocent.

Sheila coped admirably in her first few days, using her negotiating skills to the full. After only six weeks in the job she even managed to *bring about* a reconciliation between two of her colleagues who were having a petty dispute and also succeeded in *bringing a matter*

*before her minister*, which saved him some embarrassment and for which he was very grateful. Her name was becoming known both in the House of Commons and also in her constituency where her efficiency was even *bringing round* to her point of view those electors who had voted against her.

Everything seemed to be going her way. She was on the point of *bringing off* a very difficult task given to her by her minister when she found herself being *brought back* to earth with a bang. Another young politician, a bit older than her, was also trying to make his name and he was able to *bring about* what she had failed to achieve in time. From then on there was great rivalry between the two, which *brought about* a lively debate in the national press. Although her natural courage and strong character brought her through this stressful time, for some reason Sheila had taken a strong dislike to David Evans. She even *brought her mother in on* the concerns she was expressing to colleagues about her sense of unease whenever she had any dealings with the man. Her mother, she was convinced, had shuddered at the mention of the name «Evans».

At the end of the first year just before the summer recess, a revelation was *brought to light*, which was to change Sheila's life. The celebrated Mr Evans was *brought before the court* and found guilty of a financial irregularity. His political career was *brought to an abrupt end*. This news *brought out* the worst in the tabloid press, which *brought up* everything they could concerning Evans and his family. It wasn't long before one newspaper *brought the discussion round* to the subject of Mr Evans senior. Within weeks during the summer holiday one major paper *brought out* the details of the case concerning the late Mr Evans senior. He too had been responsible for a financial scandal but the blame had attached to Sheila's father. At the news Mary had fainted. As Sheila *brought her mother round* with smelling salts, she assured the press as she always did by affirming that they way you were was solely the result of the way you were *brought up*.

### Vocabulary Explanations

*brought up* by her mother  
**reared/educated** by her mother

his business had been *brought down*  
his business had **gone bankrupt**

criminal charges had been *brought against* him  
he had been **faced with** criminal charges

*bring up* this information  
**reveal** this information

Mary would always *bring up the rear*  
Mary would always **be there in the background**

she decided to *bring* her daughter *on* in the art of public speaking  
she decided to **develop** her daughter's public speaking skills

the awareness *brought* her *up against*  
the awareness had **forced** her **into** being cautious

the whole business had *brought* shame *on* the family name  
the whole business had **dishonoured** the family name

*bring about* a reconciliation  
**effect** a reconciliation

was even *bringing round* to  
was even **convincing**

*bringing off*  
**achieving** success

he was able to *bring about*  
he **succeeded** in (+ing)

which *brought about* a lively debate  
which **caused** a lively debate

she even *brought* her mother *in* on  
she even **involved** her mother

was *brought to light*  
was **revealed**

Mr. Evans was *brought before* the court  
Mr. Evans was **charged**

his political career was *brought to* an abrupt end  
his political career **ended** precipitately

This news *brought out* the worst  
This news **caused** the worst to come out

*brought* the discussion *round to* **steered** the discussion towards

one major paper *brought out* the details  
one major paper **published** the details

Sheila *brought* her mother *round*  
Sheila **revived** her mother

the way you were *brought up*  
the way you were **reared**

Here will see some sentences (*in italics*) as they occur in the story  
with a re-written version below.  
Some of the sentences *in italics* are abridged.

*She owed it all to the way she had been brought up by her mother, Mary.*

She owed it all to the way her mother, Mary, had reared her.

*Her father had died of a heart attack when she was only two after his business had been brought down following a financial scandal.*

Her father had died of a heart attack when she was only two after his business had gone bankrupt following a financial scandal.

*Criminal charges had been brought against him but the matter was closed on his death.* He had been faced with criminal charges but the matter was concluded after he died.

*The press decided to bring up this information without being able to get at the truth thanks to Mary's skilful management.*

The press decided to make this information public with being able to reveal the truth due to Mary's professional management.

*In fact during the election as Sheila went round from house to house canvassing, Mary would always bring up the rear.* In fact during the election as Sheila went round from door to door promoting her candidacy, Mary would always be there in the background.

*Her mother had observed early on that Sheila was very good at sticking up for herself and always arguing her case well, which had decided her to bring her daughter on in the art of public speaking.*

Her mother had noticed early on that Sheila was very good at standing her own ground and always fighting her case well, which had decided her to develop her daughter's public speaking skills.

*The awareness that Sheila had had all her life about her father's apparent «disgrace» brought her up against the necessity constantly to be on her guard.*

The realization that Sheila had always about her father's so-called «shame» had forced her into being cautious all the time.

*All she would hint at was that the whole business had brought shame on the family name, although her father was totally innocent.*

All she would point out was that the whole business had dishonoured the family name, although her father was not at fault at all.

*After only six weeks in the job she even managed to bring about a reconciliation between two of her colleagues who were having a petty dispute and also succeeded in bringing a matter before her minister....*

Only six weeks after she had entered the job she even managed to effect a settlement between two of her colleagues who were having a quarrel and also succeeded in raising a topic with her minister...

*Her name was becoming known both in the House of Commons and also in her constituency where her efficiency was even bringing round to her point of view those electors who had voted against her.*

Her name was becoming popular both in the House of Commons as well as in her constituency where her competence was even

convincing those electors who had voted against her.

*She was on the point of bringing off a very difficult task given to her by her minister when she found herself being brought back to earth with a bang.*

She was about to achieve success in a very difficult project her minister had given her when she suddenly was faced with reality again.

*Another young politician, a bit older than her, was also trying to make his name and he was able to bring about what she had failed to achieve in time.*

Another young politician, a bit older than her, was also trying to make a name for himself and he succeeded in accomplishing what she had failed to achieve in time.

*From then on there was great rivalry between the two, which brought about a lively debate in the national press.*

From then on there was a huge competition between the two which caused a colourful discussion in the national press.

*She even brought her mother in on the concerns she was expressing to colleagues about her sense of unease whenever she had any dealings with the man.*

She even involved her mother in the misgivings she was pointing out to colleagues about the her discomfort she felt whenever she had any business with the man.

*At the end of the first year just before the summer recess, a revelation was brought to light, which was to change Sheila's life.*

At the end of the first year shortly before the summer break, a fact was revealed, which was to alter Sheila's life.

*The celebrated Mr. Evans was brought before the court and found guilty of a financial irregularity.*

The famous Mr. Evans was successfully charged with having committed a financial misdemeanor.

*His political career was brought to an abrupt end.*

His political career ended suddenly.

*This news brought out the worst in the tabloid press, which brought up everything they could concerning Evans and his family.*

This message caused the yellow press to dig up the dirt on Evans and his family.

*It wasn't long before one newspaper brought the discussion round to the subject of Mr Evans senior.*

It didn't take long for one newspaper to steer the debate towards the issue of Mr Evans' father.

*Within weeks during the summer holiday one major paper brought out the details of the case concerning the late Mr Evans senior.*

Within weeks during the summer break one major newspaper published the details of the case regarding the deceased Mr Evans

senior.

*As Sheila brought her mother round with smelling salts, she assured the press as she always did by affirming that they way you were was solely the result of the way you were brought up.*

As Sheila revived her mother with ammoniac, she once again told the press that they way you were was entirely the result of the way you were reared.

### 23. Phrasal verb hold or «Hold on»

This is another story with lots of *Phrasal Verb* examples. As you probably know phrasal verbs are made up of two parts — the verb + a preposition.

I'm sure you have noticed that one phrasal verb can have hundreds of different meanings. In this story we focus on the verb *hold*.

Before we start I'd like you to look at this example:

«Please *hold on* a minute I'll be right back!»  
Can you guess the meaning of this sentence? You're right. It means  
«Please wait a minute, don't go away until I'm back.»

Would you like more examples? Read this story and try to guess the meaning of the 24 expressions with the verb *hold* in *italics*.

#### «Hold on»

Some people can't stand open spaces. That's called «agoraphobia». Some people can't stand closed spaces. That's called «claustrophobia». I suffer from the latter. Whenever I travel in a lift, I have to *hold myself together* just in case I get the urge to shout and scream. I must admit I do *hold off* doing things like that whenever other people are present. The other day I was put to the test and had to *hold on to* every bit of self control I had.

I was late for an appointment on the fifth floor of the building because my train had been *held up* through some technical hitch or other. Despite my endeavour to lose weight and use stairs wherever possible I had no alternative but to use the lift on this occasion. I ran to catch it just as the doors were closing until someone kindly *held them back* for me. We went first to the second floor and three people got out leaving a total of six, well within the specified maximum load. Then the wretched thing stopped between the third and fourth floor. The different reactions were interesting.

First there was silence for a minute, everyone *holding to* the old-fashioned belief in Britain that you don't talk to strangers. The first person to *hold forth* was an old man with a long grey beard. He didn't know how people nowadays could be so inefficient. «How», he asked his captive audience, «did these people *hold down* their jobs?» When he was a young man, he continued when no-one answered his question, «you *held on to* a job only if you did it properly.» Most people *held off* making any comments because they were too preoccupied with the irritation of being delayed.

I decided to *hold out* a helping hand mainly to control my nerves by suggesting that we pushed the emergency button, wondering just how long I could in reality *hold out* without breaking out in a sweat or screaming. The young woman standing next to the control panel dutifully pressed the red button. We waited. The silence was broken by the old man announcing to the group that he «personally didn't

*hold with* this newfangled technology In his younger days he ... » — but we were spared another history lesson when a voice was heard crackling through the speaker grill telling us that it was aware of our situation. At this we all laughed including the old man. It broke the ice. Feelings were not being *held in* any longer. Comments were exchanged as to how long we would be *held up* in the lift. One man dressed appropriately in black looked mournful not *holding out* much hope for a speedy repair. He had experienced problems with this lift on another occasion.

Meantime I was actively *holding back* my feelings of stress and anxiety as everyone else was being so calm. I tried to think of other things and wondered whether my appointment could be *held over* for another day, promising next time to *hold to* my plan of using stairs.

Fortunately our spirits *held up* very well. We all seemed to *hold ourselves up* to each other as models of calmness and patience so that nobody dared show any weakness. This certainly helped me. Every ten minutes or so the disembodied voice consoled us inviting us to *hold on* for just a bit longer. As time ticked by the voice told us its name was Eric. We got to know Eric quite well that morning as he *held out* promises of an early release. He made us laugh, too. His last pronouncement telling us to *hold on* yet again was followed by the reassuring:

«Now, don't go away, will you?» We did of course — two hours later.

### Vocabulary Explanations

I have to *hold myself together*  
I have to **compose** myself

I do *hold off* doing things  
I **delay** doing things

*hold on to*  
**cling to**

*held up*  
**stuck** in

*held them back*  
**stopped** them

*holding to* the old-fashioned belief  
**maintaining** the old-fashioned belief

*hold forth*  
**speak** out

hold down their jobs  
**continue** to keep their jobs

*held on to* a job  
**retain/keep** a job



*held off* making any comments  
**refrained** from making any comments

*hold out* a helping hand  
**offer** a hand

*hold out* without breaking out  
**hang on** without breaking out into a sweat

*hold with* this newfangled technology  
**believe in** this newfangled technology

feelings were not being *held in* any longer  
feelings were not being **suppressed** any longer

*held up* in the lift  
**trapped** in a lift

*holding out* much hope  
**offering** much hope

*holding back* my feelings  
**suppressing** my feelings

my appointment could be *held over* for another day  
my appointment could be **postponed** to another day

*hold to* my plan  
**stick** to my plan

our spirits *held up* very well  
our spirits **remained** high

we all seemed to *hold ourselves up*  
we all seemed to **remain** in high spirits

*hold on* for just a bit longer  
**stay** on for just a bit longer

*held out* promises  
**offered** promises

*hold on*  
**stay** on

## 24. Phrasal verb take or «Take on»

In this story I'd like to take you on a journey to discover the secrets of another phrasal verb — *take*.

As you probably know by now phrasal verbs are made up of two parts — the verb + a preposition.

I'm sure you have noticed that one phrasal verb can have hundreds of different meanings. Here are just two examples:

- The airplane is *taking off* in 30 minutes.
- Last summer I *took up* a new hobby — scuba diving.

Can you guess the meaning of these sentence? You're right. The first expressions means that «the airplane is leaving the ground in 30 minutes — it starts flying in 30 minutes.»

The second expression means that «I started a new hobby last hobby — I started to scuba dive.»

What about some more examples? Read this story and try to guess the meaning of the expressions with the verb *take* in *italics*.

### «Take On»

When he was forty-two, Charlie Banham was made redundant. He didn't *take to* the idea at all. It all happened so quickly. His boss, Angus Henderson, whom Charlie had not *taken to* the moment he'd *taken over* from his previous boss eighteen months before, *took* him *aside* early one Monday morning and asked him to come to his office, assuring him as he did so that it wouldn't *take up* much of his time. He was right. Henderson asked him to sit down, *took up* a piece of paper and proceeded to read from it. The content of the speech was that Charlie would have to go but of course, if he wished, he could *take* the matter *up* with the managing director and *take* the matter *further*. In other words Charlie was being asked to *take* himself *off* as quickly as possible. It took several minutes before Charlie could really *take in* the news. What really galled him was that Henderson was so *taken up with* himself that he couldn't even be bothered to thank Charlie for his services over the last ten years. Charlie was apparently being blamed for the drop in sales of his new product which he had convinced everyone would soon *take off*.

Charlie cleared his desk and went to the canteen to enjoy his last cup of coffee there. Colleagues assured him he was lucky. With his free time, they said, Charlie could *take up* all those hobbies and interests for which he had never had time before. He would soon *take to* his new life, drawing his pension and enjoying the financial benefits of his lump sum. But Charlie had other ideas. At first he was so *taken aback* by the news that he couldn't think straight. Then all he wanted was to *take* Henderson *by* the throat and tell him exactly what he thought of him. But Charlie *took after* his father who always looked on the bright side and slowly he began to *take in* the possible

advantages he could get from his new situation. There was no point, he thought to himself, in *taking it out on* Henderson. After all Henderson couldn't help being crass, insensitive and thoughtless but on the other hand other people could be prevented from behaving in the same way. Within the space of about six months his time was completely *taken up with* making preparations for setting up a new agency. Out of sheer perverseness he decided to call his new company the Henderson Agency so that he would always be clear in his mind what his aims were and what task he had *taken on*. The agency was set up to offer advice to employers on good management. He *took out* a loan from his local bank to refurbish an office, worked out a detailed business plan, which the bank manager was quite *taken with*, advertised for some staff and *took on* two of the fifty that applied and set up his business. Within three years he had *taken on* another ten staff and *taken over* a local agency that had failed to make a profit. Many people in the area originally *took* him *for* a bit of a confidence trickster but they soon found out that he was very effective and successful and it wasn't long before they *took back* all their critical remarks. Charlie suspected that Henderson had been at the bottom of these allegations. Nevertheless he still continued to *take in* a large amount of business and was able to set up other agencies in two neighbouring towns.

After five years to the day Charlie found he was earning far more money now than if he had stayed with his old company. He soon began to realize that he was very wealthy even when you had *taken* the tax *away* from his earnings. At the same time he didn't *take on airs*, he remained the same person who had lost his job five years ago. In fact in those days he would be the one who made others laugh by taking off the boss. Now he was one of the bosses himself.

The following day he had a chance to show what kind of employer he was. Sitting in front of him was his old boss, Henderson, who had also been redundant and had *taken upon* himself to apply for a job with Charlie. As Henderson assured him he would be prepared to undertake any type of work. Charlie had this irresistible feeling that he would like to *take* Henderson *down* but he resisted. Then as he *took down* Henderson's details, he had a brilliant idea and asked Henderson whether he would like to *take on* a role in a training video he was making. Henderson *took to* the idea immediately and agreed to do it. Charlie *took out* a video they had already made from the shelf behind him and showed Henderson the title: «How to manage people.» Then, making sure Henderson was *taking* everything *in*, he leaned across his desk and said: «Now the one I would like you to be in will be called: HOW NOT TO MANAGE PEOPLE.»

### Vocabulary Explanations

he didn't *take to* the idea  
he didn't **like** the idea

*taken over* from his previous boss  
**acquired** the job from his previous boss

*took him aside*  
he **led** him to one side to talk to him privately

*take up*  
much of his time  
**occupy** much of his time

*took up* a piece of paper  
**picked** up a piece of paper

*take the matter up*  
**discuss** the matter

*take the matter further*  
**discuss** the matter in greater detail

*take himself off*  
**dismiss**/fire himself

*take in* the news  
**absorb/grasp** the news

*taken up with* himself  
**preoccupied** with himself

sales would soon *take off*  
sales would soon **rise** considerably

*take up* all those hobbies  
**start** doing all his hobbies

*take to* his new life  
**enjoy** his new life

*taken aback* by the news  
**shocked** by the news

*take Henderson by* the throat  
**strangle** Henderson

he *took after* his father  
he **was like** his father

*take in* the possible advantages  
**comprehend** the possible advantages

*taking it out on* Henderson  
**blaming** Henderson

*taken up with* making preparations  
**preoccupied** with making preparations

what task he had *taken on*  
what task he had **committed** himself to

he *took out* a loan  
he **negotiated** a loan

the bank manager *taken with*  
the bank manager was **impressed** by

*took on* two of the fifty that applied  
employed/hired two of the fifty that applied

*taken on* another ten staff  
**employed/hired** another ten staff

*taken over* a local agency  
**become owner** of a local agency

they *took* him *for*  
they **regarded** him as

they *took back* all their critical remarks  
they **retracted** all their critical remarks

*take in* a large amount of business  
**generate** a large amount of business

*taken* the tax *away* from his earnings  
**deducted** the tax from his earnings

he didn't *take on airs*  
he didn't **behave** in a conceited way

taking off the boss  
**mimicking** the boss

he had *taken upon* himself to apply for a job  
he had **decided** to apply for a job

*take* Henderson *down*  
humiliate Henderson

as he *took down* Henderson's details  
as he **wrote** down/**jotted** down Henderson's details

*take on* a role  
**accept** a role

he *took to* the idea immediately  
he **liked** the idea immediately

Charlie *took out* a video  
Charlie **removed** a video

Henderson was *taking* everything *in*  
Henderson was **absorbing/grasping** everything

Here will see some sentences (*in italics*) as they occur in the story with a re-written version below.

Some of the sentences *in italics* are abridged.

*When he was forty-two, Charlie Banham was made redundant.*  
At the age of 42 Charlie Banham lost his job.

*He didn't take to the idea at all.*  
He didn't like the fact that he had lost his job.

*His boss, Angus Henderson, whom Charlie had not taken to the moment he'd taken over from his previous boss eighteen months before, took him aside early one Monday morning and asked him to come to his office, assuring him as he did so that it wouldn't take up much of his time.*

Angus Henderson had been Charlie's boss for 18 months and throughout that time Charlie hadn't really liked him. Early one Monday morning Angus wanted to talk to Charlie in private and told him it wouldn't take long.

*Henderson asked him to sit down, took up a piece of paper and proceeded to read from it.*

Henderson asked him to sit down, picked up a piece of paper and started reading from it.

*The content of the speech was that Charlie would have to go but of course, if he wished, he could take the matter up with the managing director and take the matter further.*

In summary Charlie had to leave the company and he was told that if he liked he could talk about this matter with the managing director and have additional discussions.

*In other words Charlie was being asked to take himself off as quickly as possible.*

In other words, Charlie was being asked to remove himself as quickly as possible.

*It took several minutes before Charlie could really take in the news.*

It took several minutes before Charlie could really grasp what had happened.

*What really galled him was that Henderson was so taken up with himself that he couldn't even be bothered to thank Charlie for his services over the last ten years.*

What really made him angry was that Henderson was so preoccupied with himself that he couldn't even be bothered to thank Charlie for his services over the last ten years.

*Charlie was apparently being blamed for the drop in sales of his new product which he had convinced everyone would soon take off.*

Charlie was obviously being blamed for the decrease in sales of his new product which he had persuaded everyone would soon be successful.

*With his free time, they said, Charlie could take up all those hobbies and interests for which he had never had time before.*

With his free time, they said, Charlie could pursue all those hobbies and interests for which he had never had time before.

*He would soon take to his new life.*

He would soon start to like his new life.

*At first he was so taken aback by the news that he couldn't think straight.*

At first he was so shocked by the news that he couldn't think clearly.

*Then all he wanted was to take Henderson by the throat.*

Then all he wanted was to strangle Henderson.

*But Charlie took after his father.*

But Charlie resembled his father.

But Charlie was very much like his father.

*He began to take in the possible advantages he could get from his new situation.*

He began to comprehend the possible advantages he could get from his new situation.

*There was no point, he thought to himself, in taking it out on Henderson.*

There was no point, he thought to himself, in blaming Henderson.

*Within the space of about six months his time was completely taken up with making preparations for setting up a new agency.*

Within about six month his time was completely occupied with making preparations for starting a new agency.

*.... so that he would always be clear in his mind what his aims were and what task he had taken on.*

..... so that he would always be aware what his aims were and what task he had undertaken.

*He took out a loan from his local bank to refurbish an office, worked out a detailed business plan, which the bank manager was quite taken with, advertised for some staff and took on two of the fifty that applied and set up his business.*

He negotiated a loan with his local bank to establish an office, worked out a detailed business plan, which the bank manager was quite impressed with, advertised for some staff and employed two of the fifty that applied and set up his business.

*Within three years he had taken on another ten staff and taken over a local agency that had failed to make a profit.*

Within three years he had hired ten more people and bought out a local agency that had failed to make a profit.

*Many people in the area originally took him for a bit of a confidence trickster but they soon found out that he was very effective and successful and it wasn't long before they took back all their critical*

*remarks.*

Many people in the area initially regarded him a bit of a confidence trickster but they soon found out that he was very effective and successful and it wasn't long before they admitted they were wrong with their critical remarks.

*Nevertheless he still continued to take in a large amount of business.*  
Nevertheless he still continued to generate a large amount of business.

*He soon began to realize that he was very wealthy even when you had taken the tax away from his earnings.*

He soon began to realize that he was very rich even when you had deducted the tax from his earnings.

*At the same time he didn't take on airs, he remained the same person who had lost his job five years ago.*

At the same time he didn't behave in a conceited way, he stayed the same person who had lost his job five years ago.

*Sitting in front of him was his old boss, Henderson, who had also been redundant and had taken upon himself to apply for a job with Charlie.*

Sitting in front of him was his old boss, Henderson, who had also lost his job and had decided to apply for a job with Charlie.

*As Henderson assured him he would be prepared to undertake any type of work, Charlie had this irresistible*

*feeling that he would like to take Henderson down but he resisted.*

As Henderson assured him he would be ready to accept any type of job, Charlie had this terrible feeling that he would like to humiliate Henderson but he suppressed this thought.

*Then as he took down Henderson's details, he had a brilliant idea and asked Henderson whether he would like to take on a role in a training video he was making.*

Then as he wrote down Henderson's details, he had an excellent idea and asked Henderson whether he would like to accept a role in a training video he was making.

*Henderson took to the idea immediately and agreed to do it.*

Henderson liked the idea straight away and accepted it.

*Charlie took out a video they had already made from the shelf behind him and showed Henderson the title.*

Charlie removed a video they had already produced from the shelf behind him and showed Henderson the title.

*Then, making sure Henderson was taking everything in, he leaned across his desk and said: «Now the one I would like you to be in will be called: HOW NOT TO MANAGE PEOPLE.»*

Then, making sure Henderson was absorbing everything, he leaned across his desk and said: «Now the one I would like you to be in will be called: HOW NOT TO MANAGE PEOPLE.»



## 25. Phrasal verb look or «Look out!»

This story contains a lot of combinations with the phrasal verb *look*. Do you know the meaning of all of them? Read the story and then look at the explanations below to check your knowledge.

### «Look Out!»

If you happen to report to the authorities you've seen a U.F.O (Unidentified Flying Object), very often you are *looked on* as if you're someone who needs *looking after*. In other words they don't believe you. People are usually reluctant to believe the extraordinary. You happen to have a room in a hotel *looking on to* the lake in Scotland where there's supposed to be a monster and you're just *looking out of* the window and there is the monster. You're *looking at* it now. You point at it and tell everyone to *look out of* the window because you've seen it. What do they do? They *look away*. They've heard it all before. I suppose it's not surprising because whenever you *look at* photographs of so-called monsters and beasts, they're never very clear. People sometimes *look into* the matter but there never seems to be any proof. Whenever I read in the newspaper about someone who has allegedly had a mystical or strange encounter with a person or thing and is *looking for* support or is *looking forward to* finding someone who will accept their story, I *look back* to a time some years ago when something similar happened to me.

At the time I was living in a house which had a small alley at the side. When you walked down the path you passed a window in the house next door and you tried to *look ahead of* you to avoid *looking through* the window and seeing what was going on. This house had been empty for some time but now seemed to be occupied. One night as the light was on in the room I couldn't resist *looking through* the window and saw a very short woman waving at me. She opened the window, introduced herself and invited me to *look in on* her one day soon. I *looked her up and down* because she seemed so small and spoke in a strange cracked voice. I forgot all about the invitation when one morning in the high street I noticed a woman seeming to come towards me. I took no notice because I assumed she was about to speak to the person next to me. I obviously didn't know her. To my surprise she addressed her remarks to me: «I've been *looking out for* you. You *looked* right through me as though I wasn't there.» Several shoppers round about *looked on* wondering what was happening. «We spoke through the window — I'm from next door.» I apologized, agreed to come round the following afternoon and said I was *looking forward to* meeting the rest of the family. I *looked round* to take a closer *look at* the woman but there was no sign of her. The reason why I wanted to *look her over* again was that she seemed to be twice the height. The face was the same and the voice. My imagination was telling me that possibly she was a witch.

Although I was a little apprehensive about the visit, I had agreed to *look her up* and duly called the next day. As I *looked about* the hall, I noticed signs of the zodiac cut into the floor and a large broom leaning in the corner. «The rest of the family» I had referred to in

the high street consisted of seven black cats. Fortunately my hostess remained the same size as we chatted over a cup of tea. She said how delighted she was that I had agreed to visit her as she had the feeling that the other neighbours *looked down on* her. After an hour and a half I *looked* her straight in the face, made some excuse about an appointment and left hoping that I hadn't been put under a spell for telling a lie. When I got home, I *looked up* the word «witch» in my encyclopedia and was amazed to find that one of abilities a witch has is to change size. From then on I tended to walk down the left side of my house after that near my other neighbour, Mrs. Tendett. Some weeks later she hailed me as I came home: «Things are *looking up*», she exclaimed. «That empty house on the other side has apparently been sold at last.» It didn't seem a good idea to inform Mrs. Tendett that I had had tea in the «empty» house with a witch, especially as she had always *looked up to* me for some reason. I didn't make a particular point of *looking out for* my new neighbours but when I did meet them they seemed a normal enough young couple. What disturbed me slightly was the name. To make sure I had heard it right, I *looked it up* in the telephone directory: Mr. and Mrs. Broom.

### Vocabulary Explanations

often you are *looked on*  
often you are **regarded**

needs *looking after*  
needs **medical attention**

*looking onto* the lake  
**with a view** on the lake

just *looking out of* the window  
just **looking through** the window

You are *looking at it* now  
You **can see it** now

They *look away*  
They look **in the other direction**

*look at* photographs  
**see** photographs

*look into* the matter  
**investigate** the matter

*looking for* support  
**hoping for** support

*looking forward to* finding  
**awaiting with pleasure the idea of** finding

I *look back to* a time  
**I reminisce about** a time

to *look ahead of* you.  
**look in front of** you

*looking through* the window  
**looking through** the window to the other side

*look in on* her  
**visit** her

I *looked her up and down*  
**I examined what she looked like**

*looking out for* you  
**trying to find** you

*looked right through* me  
**ignored** me

*looked on*  
**watched**

*looked round*  
turned to **look**

*look her over* again  
**check what she looked** like again

*look her up*  
**pay her a visit**

*looked about* the hall  
had a **good look at** the hall

*looked down on* her  
**despised** her

*looked her straight in the face*  
**looked at her face to face**

*looked up* the word  
**checked the meaning of** the word

things are *looking up*  
things **are improving**

*looked up to* me  
**respected** me

*looking out for* my neighbours  
**trying to see** my neighbours

## 26. Phrasal verb go or «Going on»

Here is a story with another Phrasal Verb — «go». Read the story and try to understand the different meanings of the phrasal verbs and then to help you I have given an explanation of the verbs at the end but don't look at the end first. Read the story and find the expressions with *go* in *Italics*.  
And now — «Go On»!

### «Going on»

Ever since I can remember I have spent the evening in draughty halls, church halls, community centres, town halls or huts converted for the evening into halls and sat on hard wooden seats watching other people trying to make me believe that they are different people. If you don't know what I'm *going on about*, I should explain that I have seen a lot plays acted by amateur dramatic companies. Comments like that of course don't *go down very well* with the amateur actors themselves who sometimes *go around* with a long face if they read a bad criticism in the local paper of their acting and can't stop smiling if the critic *goes on* about how wonderful they are. It is after all only a hobby. But amateur acting unlike fishing, collecting stamps or bird watching is not a solitary activity. You can't just *go through* an entire play on your own in an empty hall — you need an audience. Acting and audiences *go together* like bread and butter.

The thing about amateurs is that very often they don't get it right and when the lights *go out*, you wonder what's *going to* happen. The results can be unintentionally amusing for the audience and occasionally it's just as well that the lights have *gone out*, because you can quietly conceal your mirth in the darkness. Now, I don't want to give the impression that I *go about* looking for trouble but there have been some very amusing moments in my *theatre-going*, which unfortunately have taken place at very serious moments in the play. I *went out* the other night to see a performance of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Everything was *going along fine* up to the famous balcony scene. I should point out that Romeo in this version was a good deal older than the part demanded and was fairly big and the same was true of Juliet, whose size came in useful as it turned out so you could say they *went well together*. But I'd better *go back* to the plot. The action calls for Romeo to climb up a ladder onto Juliet's balcony. Now our hero was clearly not the athletic type and didn't relish the idea of scaling that ladder but in the end he decided to *go for it*. Unluckily for him the rope ladder couldn't take his weight. Quick as a flash Juliet grabbed the other end and stopped him falling to the ground. As Romeo *went ahead* with his passionate love speech, Juliet *went through* her part as well as she could, pausing now and again for breath to stop her crashing to the floor.

Then there was the time I *went to see* a melodrama. A man was standing in front of a firing squad and the executioners were on the point of firing when we heard what sounded like three gunshots. The problem was that the officer hadn't yet given the order to fire.

The victim didn't know whether to die or wait a bit. A long silence followed and the poor man decided to «die» gracefully. Apparently the sound effects person had let off the explosives by mistake and there weren't enough to *go round* for a second attempt. My *heart went out* to the person playing the condemned man but shortly afterwards the curtain *went down* and so concealed his embarrassment.

Perhaps the saddest example of a theatrical disaster that I sat through was the occasion when an actor hadn't *gone over* his lines thoroughly enough before the performance started. I won't *go into* too much detail about the play. Suffice it to say that it was a very serious drama concerning a man who was convinced that everyone was against him. He was complaining about prices *going up*, which he claimed was the reason for his business *going under*. As an actor he had nothing *going for him*. He looked wrong, his voice was unpleasant and worst of all he kept forgetting his lines. The audience was getting restless and several people had already left. The final straw was a big soliloquy towards the end of the play. He was in the middle of the stage and forgetting his lines. Each time he forgot he dashed to the left then remembered that the prompt was on the right and ran to the other side. What was supposed to be high tragedy developed into high farce. The main point of the speech was that he would give up all his possessions, *go without everything* and do without everyone. He certainly got his wish. At the end of the play he only had me and two others to give the final round of applause.

### Vocabulary Explanations

- *going on about*  
talking about in detail
- *not go down very well*  
not be accepted easily by
- *go around*  
walk about
- *go through*  
complete (a performance of)
- *go together*  
combine/join up
- *go out*  
are turned out/off
- *go about looking for*  
trying hard to find
- *went out*  
left home/the house

- *going along*  
continuing
- *went well together*  
suited each other
- *go back*  
return
- *go for it*  
take a chance
- *went ahead*  
proceeded with
- *went off*  
exploded
- *go around*  
suffice/be sufficient
- *my heart went out*  
I felt sympathy for
- *went down*  
came down
- *gone over*  
practised
- *go into detail*  
explain exactly
- *going up*  
increasing
- *going down*  
getting worse
- *nothing going for him*  
nothing to recommend him
- *go without everything*  
no longer have anything

## 27. Phrasal verb run or «A Christmas postman»

This story contains a lot of combinations with the phrasal verb *run*. Do you know the meaning of all of them? Read the story and then take the four interactive tests below to check your knowledge.

### «A Christmas postman»

My main reason for becoming a temporary postman during the Christmas holiday period was because I had *run up* some rather large bills and what was more important I had *run out of* money. My trainer was a postman by the name of Ted with a life time of experience in doing all the walks in the town. It was all a question of order, he said and then he *ran through* the steps I had to take the moment I got into the sorting office. He didn't want any of his trainees to *run away with* the idea that being a postman was an easy job. He was fed up with people he *ran across* every so often who claimed that it was only a part-time job because it was all finished by mid-day. He *ran over* the sequence very carefully. The first thing was to be punctual since you started at a time when most people were still asleep. Immediately you arrived you had to start sorting the mail into the different pigeon holes. Sometimes you *ran up against* some terrible handwriting and didn't know where the letter should go. He was always *running down* teachers for not teaching children to write properly. These letters should be put to one side and old Charlie, the handwriting expert, would *run through* them later. The next step was to *run off* some cold water, fill the kettle and then make a cup of tea. Ted was always calm and optimistic. He never let himself get *run down* by the job. He left me alone for an hour to follow his method and asked me to call him if I *ran into* any difficulties. As he had been *running about* his house since two that morning because of a burst water pipe, he went to have a quiet rest.

At first I got on famously finding the right pigeonholes, checking Ted's list and putting the letters in bundles. After about two hours of this my internal battery started to *run down* and I found myself *running out of* patience. It was at this stage that Ted came *running in* encouraging me to finish and get out on the road. The post office in this country district didn't *run to* vans because of the expense. I had to make do with a bicycle that looked as though it had been *run into* several times. Once out in the open air I *ran into* a violent shower but soon the sun came out. The shouts of joy coming from some houses as I put the mail through the letter box made up for the discomfort and I was beginning to feel like a real Father Christmas. I then came to number 56 that Ted had warned me about. They had a ferocious dog. The only way to deal with this one, Ted recommended, was to *run at* the door shove the letters through the door and *run away* as quickly as possible. I did just that but in my haste I dropped a small packet that fell into a puddle. I didn't have the courage to make another assault on the house. Instead I took the packet home to dry it out. I knew if I told Ted, he would *run on about* being strictly against the rules but I was convinced it would not matter. In my kitchen I *ran my eyes across* the address and saw the recipient was a «Master Richard» I was ashamed of my

cowardice and thought I was depriving a young child of his Christmas present from some loving relative. I rubbed the package with a towel and *ran back* to number 56. *Running down* the path in the true spirit of the season, clutching the precious bundle in my hand I thrust it through the letter box expecting to hear a happy yelp of surprise from young Richard. As I *ran away* to the sound of the barking dog, I *ran* by accident *into* the garden gate just in time to hear a voice shouting: «Master Richard! When will that woman realise I'm over fifty and can't stand hand knitted socks!»



## 28. Phrasal verb fall

It was one o'clock in the morning, I had no money and I had just missed the last through train to where I was living at the time. The people I was with **fell about** laughing at my predicament as they had only lived a few minutes' walk away. I phoned home to see if there would be any chance of a lift from the station where the train would stop but that little plan **fell through** as the car had broken down and was in the garage for repair. I had no alternative but to **fall back** on my own initiative. Whatever that meant. I even thought of persuading the train driver to **fall in with** what I thought was an original idea namely just this once to go the extra twenty miles to where I lived. Then I dismissed the idea and thought that if I put it to him I might **fall out with** him and then I wouldn't even be able to go the forty miles already scheduled.

The train left punctually, stopping at all the minor stations on the way. By the time we were approaching the end of the journey the number of passengers had **fallen off** considerably. Finally there seemed to be about six passengers left in my carriage, two of whom I casually **fell into** conversation with, desperately hoping that one of them had a car waiting to take them and possibly me on to my desired destination. I **fell on** one of them who mentioned he had a car but it turned out that it was **falling apart**. He wasn't too happy about this as he had only just bought it and admitted that he had been stupid enough to **fall for** the salesman's glib talk that it was in good condition. My own initiative did not prove very resourceful as things **had fallen out** and there I stood on a deserted platform twenty miles from home without a penny in my pocket.

To make matters worse it was really **falling down**. Rather than risk contracting double pneumonia I rushed into the town centre in the hope of finding inspiration. Two things caught my eye. One was a poster advertising a new film with a picture of an actress with whom I and the whole nation had **fallen in** love and the other much more practical: a sign announcing the existence of a police station. I remembered hearing a long time ago that if you were really stranded, you could always **fall back on** the local police station which could give you shelter for the night. As I walked in, the officers were just **falling out** after a period of duty and a new squad were taking over. My reason for being there did not elicit much sympathy. The officer at the main desk did not exactly **fall over** himself to offer help. There was no food available, the cells were all full and the only possibility was a chair in the waiting room or rather several wooden chairs arranged alternately in a line so that the backs prevented me from **falling off**. There was little chance of that happening since each time I was on the point of **falling off** to sleep, I was brought back to consciousness by the sound of the messages coming in from police officers in the area. I had certainly **fallen among** some very unfriendly people.

At six o'clock in the morning I caught the scent of bacon and eggs coming under the door. At the sound of the door opening I rolled off my chairs ready to **fall to** in the expectation of a full English

breakfast but the officer was empty-handed. The new shift had just **fallen in** and it was made absolutely clear to me that I was to **fall out**. As I emerged blinking into the bright sunlight I felt like a prisoner being let out after a long sentence and as I did so bumped straight into my next-door neighbour about to start his early shift. I was so embarrassed I just wanted the ground to **fall in** and hide me from the shame of it all. From that day I **fell down** in her estimation as she was convinced I had been locked up for the night for criminal behaviour. I've tried to explain what happened but she merely **falls about** laughing and refuses to believe me. It's her little joke now if anybody **falls under** suspicion and their guilt is reported in the local newspaper to take me to one side and say: 'I see so and so missed the last train.'

## 29. Phrasal verb get

I don't recommend it as it can **get** you **into** an embarrassing situation if you're not careful but then I was persuaded by a good friend of mine. I am referring to the time I returned to my old school some fifteen years after I'd left. The friend had been invited to speak as the guest of honour at some function or other at the school. He had been so insistent on my going that I couldn't really **get out of** it. Mind you, I had **got on** quite well at school but I wasn't really looking forward to coming face to face again with certain of the teachers. There was one in particular who must have been **getting on** because he'd seemed pretty ancient when I was there. His name was Harrison and he and I just didn't **get on** at all. There was something about the way he looked at you or me, anyhow as if he was about to say something unpleasant about your hair, your shoes or the way you walked and he always passed derogatory comments. It began to **get on** my nerves. I felt as I was being persecuted, being **got at**. Things had **got to** such a state that in my last few weeks at the school I'd written what I thought was a fairly satirical piece making fun of him without mentioning him by name. Nobody on the teaching staff made any mention about it before I left and so I imagined I had **got away with** it. The strange thing was that Harrison usually liked to have the last word and could not bear to be humiliated.

Apparently the function at the school was to be a formal affair and the men were supposed to wear dinner jackets, which I thought was a bit over the top. On the day of the function I was flying back from abroad and by the time I **got back** there was only a couple of hours to change and drive to the school. I say 'change' but I had no formal clothes to change into because the case with my dinner jacket had gone missing. But I didn't let that **get me down** and thought the best thing was to **get down** to the school as quickly as possible. I arrived therefore dressed in my holiday attire, **got round** the doorman by explaining my predicament and sneaked into the back of the hall and sat down.

The proceedings **got off** to a good start and my friend gave a brilliant speech. The only worrying thing was that up on the platform sat the dreaded Harrison and I had the horrible feeling that he had spotted me and he had that strange look on his face as if he was up to something. From what I had heard from people around me, some of the former students had **got up** a collection in order to make a presentation to Harrison as he was retiring this term. There was I thinking I had **got through** the evening unscathed and now I had this presentiment that somebody was about to be **got at** and that somebody was going to be me. The presentation was made by the headmaster saying he didn't know how the school would **get on** without him and other complimentary things and then handed him his leaving present. Harrison rose with an evil smile on his face and assured the Head that the school would certainly **get by** without him. He only hoped he would be able to **get by** on his pension. It all seemed to be quite harmless but I just wished he would finish his speech and **get it over**. Then suddenly he made a comment about

how they must remember how fussy he always was about appearance and being properly dressed. He had, he said, got a special prize for the best dressed old boy. I heard my name being called out. All I wanted to do was **get out** but I had no choice and strolled as casually as I could to loud cheers and cat calls, in my holiday outfit, up on to the stage. As he handed me a small book entitled 'How to look smart' and shook my hand, he whispered: "I've waited fifteen years for this!" **Get out of** this!, I said to myself.

### 30. Word story: Health

**Health** — This word seems to have its origins in the word «whole» or «wholeness» since it is an abstract word that refers to the physical state of a body, which is usually human. In other words we usually associate it with the physical state of a human or living being. People are said to be «in good health» or «enjoying good health». On the other side they could also be «suffering from poor health» or be «in poor health». It isn't until we get to the adjective «healthy» that we are talking about being «in good health». Athletes and sportsmen and women are usually «healthy».

We can also use the adjective to describe not only a physical attribute but also a moral one. You can have a «healthy attitude towards religion or sex», which means that you are objective in the views that you hold on those topics.

At the same time we can use the adjective «healthy» for states or conditions that are not directly to do with living things. We speak of the economy of a country being «healthy», which means that the country does not have huge debts.

When we raise a glass of drink to someone, we address the other person with the words: «Your health». We are in fact wishing that they are in «good health». And of course your personal health is a very important matter. A very common comment passed between people when they are talking about their money problems or their job prospects is «As long as you've got your health». This is a way of cheering themselves up by realising that whatever their problems, at least they don't have any problems with their «health».

### 31. Word story: Jokes

«Jokes» are funny stories. You tell a story and hope that the ending, what is often called the «punch line», will make the listener laugh. Let me tell you one and let's hope I at least get a smile. A man who is very fond of going to the theatre to see « thrillers», sometimes called «detective stories» or «whodunits» (because you have to find out who has committed — «done» the murder) goes to see a play but has a very bad seat. He asks the «usher» (someone who shows you to your seat) if he can find a better seat because he wants to work out who the murderer is and promises he will give him a very large «tip» (a lot of money for the service). The usher finds him a good seat. The man gives him just ONE penny. As the usher walks away, he says to the man: «*By the way the butler does it with the candlestick!*»

There are two verbs associated with «jokes — tell and make». You «tell jokes» or funny stories if you do what I have just done by «telling you a joke about» the man in the theatre. You can also «make jokes about someone». This means that you make fun of someone you know or if you are a «comic» or «comedian», someone who does this for a living, you will invariably «make jokes about» famous people and very often politicians. A «joker» is someone who is always «telling jokes» or playing tricks on people. It is also the word for the one odd card in a pack of playing cards. One useful expression connected with «jokes» is what you say to someone who asks you to do something really dangerous like bungee jumping: «*You must be joking!*»

## 32. Word story: Dictionary

The one way to settle an argument over a word is to «look in a dictionary» or we «look a word up in a dictionary». If we want to be very serious, we consult a «dictionary». There are several ways in which «compilers» of «dictionaries» or makers of a «dictionary» can approach their task. One way is to make it «descriptive» where you simply «define» it or you can be «prescriptive» when you comment on its correct use. One of the best-known compilers of a «dictionary» was the Scottish philologist, James Augustus Henry Murray who is famous for having laid the foundations of what is known as the «Oxford English Dictionary». Someone who creates a «dictionary» is called a «lexicographer». It was a long process and although he lived till he was 78, Murray did not see the completion of the work he started. The plan had been to finish the «dictionary» in 10 years but it actually took 70 and was first published in 10 volumes in 1928. Murray put an advertisement in a newspaper and asked members of the public to send him lists of words with details of where they found them. Thousands of pieces of paper were kept in his garden shed which he called the «scriptorium». Murray later met one of his most regular contributors and discovered that he was an American murderer who had been writing to him from a lunatic asylum in Britain.

The «Oxford English Dictionary» is based on what are called historical principles so that apart from finding the meaning of a word «definition» you can also see when and where it was first used. Mind you if you keep on telling everyone how much you know about words, you could expect this comment: «*What's the matter with you? Have you swallowed a dictionary?*»

### 33. Word story: Search engines

The Internet is truly a wonderland that can take you into any world, any field of knowledge you desire. The trouble is where to start and how to get where you want to. That's where we need the guidance and help of «**search engines**». They come in all shapes and sizes and have the most unusual names like: Abasearch, Altavista, Ask Jeeves, Clickey, Excite, SoDado and possibly the most famous of all, Google. All these «**search engines**» will take you to your chosen site in seconds and then give you thousands, if not millions of possibilities. Search engines is yet another expression that has been created in the age of the Internet and computing and as so often it is made up of words that are in common use with their original meanings. «**Search**» simply means «**examine in detail**» usually with the purpose of trying to find someone or something. If you mislay your car keys You search the house from top to bottom because you know that they are somewhere in the house. Again if the police suspect that someone is carrying something like an illegal drug, they may well «**search**» that person, which means they will check pockets and all items of clothing. And then there is the other half of the expression: «**engine**». This means a machine that with the help of some kind of power will be enable something to move, like the «**car engine, the steam engine**». When the word first came to be used it had the idea of natural ability or genius. So when you put the two words together as «**search engines**» there is a certain appropriateness when you consider how clever these devices are. The question is: How do they work? To be honest I really don't know or to use an expression meaning that you haven't the slightest idea how to answer a question: «**Search me!**»



### 34. Word story: Weather

The trouble with English is that there are so many words that sound exactly alike but have no connection with each other whatsoever. A case in point is «weather» which often gets muddled up with *whether*. In fact the only way to differentiate between them when speaking is to aspirate the first aitch with emphasis. But whether it's whether or «weather», the topic of this little story is the one to do with the climate — «weather». If you live in the UK and your English vocabulary is limited, you can always fall back on expressions like these: «Lovely, isn't it?» — «Couldn't be better, could it?» — «What a pleasant change!» — «Makes a difference, doesn't it?» Yes, they all refer to the weather. Apart from polite conversation the word «weather» also appears in several expressions. If you're feeling under the weather, you're not feeling very well. If you «make heavy weather of something», you're making things more difficult than they need to be. Someone gives you a job to do which would normally take about half an hour and if you are still doing it 3 hours later, then that's «making heavy weather of it». If a business is having financial problems but somehow manages to survive and be back in credit, it is said to «weather the storm». If you «keep a weather eye open», you are being very careful to see there's no trouble. The burglar or thief «keeps a weather eye open» making sure there are no police around. You may think you have a good friend but you only know how loyal they are when you want their help in a crisis. If they turn away when you need them most, we call them «fair weather friends». I don't think I've got anything more to say really. Oh, yes I've just looked out of the window and it's turned out nice again — the «weather» I mean.

### 35. Saying it twice or «Save our animals»

There are several pairs of rhyming words that have come into the language with the job of emphasising and strengthening the meaning of one of the words. I have written a short story where I have used as many of these couplets as possible and after each one I have put the meaning in brackets (.). When you are finished reading the story you can take the three tests below to check your knowledge.

#### «Save our animals»

From a very early age Cathy had been passionate about looking after animals. She used to **hob nob** (socialise) with people who thought the same way as she did. These people were not all **fuddy duddy** (uninteresting) or indeed **hoity toity** (supercilious) and their main interest in life was to ensure that all animals were treated well. She soon got to know one of the local **big wigs** (important people) in a local organisation aimed at stopping cruelty to animals. He had been in his **hey day** (at his most successful time) an important figure in a government department for agriculture. In fact because he had refused to **kow tow** to (accept without question) some of the official regulations, he had been forced to take early retirement. But as far as Cathy was concerned he was the **bee's knees** (someone to admire) and when she left school, she went to work as his assistant in the Society for the Protection of Animals. Her parents however were not all that pleased about where she had decided to work. They lived in a **des res** (very attractive house) and her father, John Fortune, who was really a bit of a **fat cat** (wealthy business man) thought that all this animal business was a lot of **hocus pocus** (nonsense). Cathy and her father had several **pow wows** (conversations) about her decision but it usually ended up with a lot of **argy bargy** (arguments).

What her mother and father objected to most was the endless **tittle tattle** (gossip) in the village about a young woman working for this **hot shot** (well known entrepreneur) who was also regarded by some as a bit of a **wheeler dealer** (someone who does business in an underhand way). Cathy didn't believe any of this and was delighted to be working for Geoffrey Winton if for no other reason than that living at home was very **hum drum** (boring). The rest of the organisation thought that she and Winton were a **dream team** (ideal partners) because she was enthusiastic and he was very experienced. After all she thought her brother was enjoying himself and had gone abroad to work in America as a result of the **brain drain** (talented people leaving their own country to work for better pay in another).

One morning there was quite a **hubbub** (loud noise and activity) in the Fortune household when Cathy came rushing into the sitting room **helter skelter** (running at a great speed) and announced what she thought was a **cheerful earful** (a good piece of news) and that was she had been invited to attend a demonstration in the capital. As far as her father was concerned this was simply **double trouble** (two problems - first working for Fortune and now getting involved in

a demonstration). As far as he was concerned this would be a waste of time because the speakers at the rally would simply talk **mumbo jumbo** (rubbish). But Cathy had made up her mind to go and the next morning **wham bam** (very quickly) she caught the early train and went off to the rally. On the train journey she began to think about what her father had said with his reference to the **rag bag** (muddled collection) of ideas in her organisation. And if she was really honest with herself, she was beginning to have a **teenie weenie** (very small) feeling of doubt as to whether she was doing the right thing. She just wished that her father could try and be **even steven** (fair) about her side of the argument. But as soon as she reached the meeting point for the rally, there was no time for day dreaming. She was straight into the **hurly burly** (the excited activity) of the meeting. At the beginning it was a bit **harum scarum** (disorganised) and people were running **higgledy piggedly** (in different and chaotic directions) but soon everything settled down and people who had been running about **pell mell** (in confusion) were now standing still and listening to the speeches. She felt reassured and was pleased she had come to the demonstration.

And then one incident at the end of the rally convinced her that she had taken the right decision to work for the organisation. A police officer on horseback was controlling the crowds and she found herself being gently moved along by the horse. As it drew near she found she was asking herself aloud whether she had done the right thing. She looked at the horse and it was actually nodding its head and she could have sworn it said **okie dokie** (all right).

### 36. Colour idioms or «A silver lining»

In this story will find *Idioms with Colours*. An idiom is a fixed expression with a certain meaning. Here are some examples:

— «If you keep spending your money like this you will be soon *in the red*.»

— «Oh come one, we all tell a *white lie* sometimes, don't we?»

— «When I left the house this morning the street was covered with *black ice* all over.»

Now read the short story and try to work out what the expressions in *italics* mean.

#### «A silver lining»

In a rash moment I said I'd buy my wife a car for her birthday. The trouble was she had set her heart on a particular colour — *white*. It had to be white at all costs. I pointed out till I was *blue in the face* — almost going out of my mind, that white was a very difficult colour to keep clean.

But she was adamant and so in the end I decided to surrender — to show the *white flag*, as it were. We looked at dozens of white and off white cars but none seemed to be worth buying.

Now, I'm a bit *green* — rather inexperienced, about buying cars. I'm the perfect customer as far as the secondhand car salesman is concerned. Take the first place we went to. The manager rolled out the *red carpet* — gave me preferential treatment, when he saw me coming. He started by showing me the most expensive models he could find, some of which made me turn *white with envy* — I was quite envious of anyone who could afford to buy one. But as soon as I mentioned the sort of age for the car I had in mind, he started to give me *black looks* — started to frown. I can't describe the language he used when I gave some idea of the price I was thinking of because it would be *red-pencilled* — censored. From the beginning I was therefore somewhat *browned off* — fed up. *Once in a blue moon* — very rarely, I thought do you come across a genuine bargain. I mean some of the dealers are thoroughly dishonest or is it that they are simply telling *white lies* — only half-truths? The trouble is you have to buy a car in order to find out. At one garage I actually caught one of the salesmen *red-handed* — in the middle of his act, just as he was gluing back a chip of paint that had fallen off. I put a *black mark* against his name — didn't think much of his reputation. But what really made me *see red* — get angry was when I was told that I would only get an old wreck for what I was prepared to pay. Perhaps I was being a bit moderate but then I didn't want to end up *in the red* — in debt to the bank. The only way to deal with these salesmen is to put on a bold face. It doesn't matter if you have a *yellow streak* — are a coward. You don't have to accept the first price and whatever you do don't give the *green light* — permission to

continue with the sale until you're absolutely satisfied.

One weekend I decided to leave my car at home and go by train to a large car centre. I was feeling *in the pink* — very fit as we approached the man standing by the sales office. He had one of those arrogant expressions that act rather like a *red rag* to me — somehow provoke me. I told him straight that I knew his centre had been *black listed* by motoring organizations — no longer approved by them and therefore it was no good him trying to *white wash* — excuse all the stories I'd heard. That wiped the arrogant expression off his face. The only trouble was that I discovered that I'd not been talking to the sales manager but a fellow customer. In my confusion I tripped over a spare tyre, rolled over and ended up in a ditch.

When I got home I was *black and blue* all over — covered in bruises.

By the sixth weekend of looking I was understandably feeling rather *blue* — somewhat depressed. I'd even considered getting a car through the *black market* — by some dishonest means.

But every cloud has a *silver lining* — things improve in the end. And that Sunday was a *red letter day* — a special day to remember, since we finally found a car. We were out driving in the countryside when *out of the blue* — totally unexpectedly, we saw a notice advertising cars for sale in a farm yard.

We saw a man in a *brown study* — deep in thought sitting in a small hut. He was the farmer cum salesman from whom I eventually bought the car. He quickly dispensed with all *the red tape* — all the formalities and very soon I had it in *black and white* — in writing that the car belonged to me. It's quite a good car and it's white or to be more accurate, it's more what you would call two tone.

You see with the white there's *quite a bit of brown* — known less colourfully as *rust*.

### 37. Cool expressions or «From one extreme to the other»

In this story will find many idioms with the word *cool*. As you know an idiom is a fixed phrase that only makes sense when you learn it as a whole because if you look at its words separately the phrase doesn't make much sense, does it?

Look at the following example:

«This job seems to be a bit of a *hot potato* as nobody really wants it.»

Now, I'm sure you understand this in this sentence the expression the *hot potato* is nothing to eat but rather a task or a responsibility that no-one wants to do or take. Maybe, you have your own examples for *hot potatoes*? If so, you can send them to us via email and we will help you cool them off.

In the meantime you might want to enjoy the following story. Do you know what all the *cool expressions* in *italics* mean?

#### «From one extreme to the other»

As the railways lines start to buckle, the beaches continue to attract thousands and the treasured pot plants in my garden wither in the extreme heat, my befuddled brain, searching for air as the temperature soars, has turned to the use we make in English of expressions to do with the variations of hot and cold. Let me tell you a story to show you what I mean:

Charlie could be relied on to *get hot under the collar* about almost anything that upset him. Whereas most people who disagree with you in an argument simply *give you a frosty look* and then move on.

Charlie would react in an entirely different way. When the argument had *hotted up*, he would *lose his cool* and start to rant and rave. Friends would take him to one side at his favourite pub and point out that behaving like that *in the heat of the moment* was not doing his heart any good. Getting *hot and bothered* over the smallest things was not conducive to a long and happy life. Women, they said, would tend to *give him the cold shoulder* if he continued to carry on like this. Then someone in the pub who was noted for being practical and could always see clearly as he said *in the cold light of day*, mentioned that he'd read somewhere of a course to help people like Charlie.

Another punter said he actually had a leaflet *hot off the press* giving details of the course. The question was who was going to mention it to Charlie as he could well *flare up* at the very idea. Dave, who at first *blew hot and cold* at the idea, eventually agreed to take on the task. There was a bit of tension at first as people waited for Charlie to react but although he didn't exactly *give it a warm welcome*, he did indicate that he would think it over and that helped to *take the*

*heat out of the moment.*

One evening in the pub someone came rushing in saying he'd come *hot foot* from Charlie's flat with news about the course. The general expectation was that Charlie had got *cold feet* about joining but the fact was that he had signed up and would be away for one whole week.

Throughout the next seven days many of the regulars were in a *cold sweat* wondering what the outcome would be. One diner in the snack bar had such a *heated argument* over it with another diner that by the time he'd got round to eating his *piping hot* soup it had become *stone cold*. Even the casual customers who were so to speak somewhat *out in the cold* because they didn't know what had been happening, quite *warmed to the idea* and decided to join in with the betting that went on as to whether Charlie would be a changed man or not. The landlord even hit on the idea of creating a new cocktail called «Cool Charlie», which sold *like hot cakes*.

Eventually the day arrived when it was known that Charlie would come to the pub again. It was also agreed that someone should be available to make a remark that would normally have caused him to lose his temper. Now, this was a bit of *hot potato* and nobody really wanted the job knowing that they might get into *hot water*.

In the end Martin, the oldest member of the club, found himself *in the hot seat* and reluctantly agreed. Suddenly the door opened and in burst Charlie. It was impossible to tell whether the course had succeeded in transforming him. It was then that Martin, virtually *in cold blood* spoke making some derogatory remark about Charlie's lack of success with women. Everyone's blood *ran cold* and those that were nearest to Charlie couldn't move an inch, they *were frozen in their tracks*. Charlie laughed quietly and then announced something that was *to warm the cockles of everyone's heart*. «Ah yes», he said *cool as a cucumber* walking over to a young woman sitting in the corner, «let me introduce you all to my fiancée.»

### 38. Book expressions or «Have you seen this book?»

There's a well-known saying that *you can't judge a book by its covers* and when you apply this to people it's another way of saying that you shouldn't form an opinion of someone purely on appearances. Expressions related to books do figure in the language. Let's have a look at some of them. You can be *in someone's good books or bad books*. In the first one people think highly of you and in the second they have a low opinion of you. If you *bring someone to book*, you are telling them off or criticising them — an expression that comes from the idea that the person in trouble has done something wrong and a policeman has written that down in his notebook. I expect you've noticed that I started the last sentence referring to «someone» and then later used the pronoun «them». I just wanted to explain that this is all right because the alternative is to say «him» and that upsets the feminists or you say «him or her» and that upsets me. But wait a minute I'm telling you all the answers and you should really be trying to work out the «book» expressions yourself.

So let me tell you a quick story.

#### «Have you seen this book?»

Are you a book collector? I'm afraid I am and any spare empty walls in my house are soon covered with shelves ready to hold my latest buys. When I see a second hand bookshop, I have to go in and always come out fully laden.

Take last week. I was in a small village in the east of England and came across what was really an antiques shop. Now antiques are a *closed book* to me. I know what I like but I can't tell the genuine from the reproduction, but books, well that's a different matter. The man running the shop was quite clear in his mind that I knew little about antiques and that my reasons for coming into his shop were an *open book* as I made straight for the corner with shelf upon shelf of books. And there shouting at me was a book with a bright blue cover that I really believed I needed. I checked the price and thought I'd casually ask if he would accept less. But he was someone who always did things *by the book*. He would not give way. He was the sort of person whose accounts would always be in perfect order. Never in his wildest dreams would he ever *cook the books*. He was also convinced that I was never any good at haggling over the price. He could clearly *read me like a book*.

Nevertheless the price seemed fair and *it suited my book* to pay the price he wanted. On the way home I pictured myself sitting down with a drink and opening the book to start reading. As I drove, I noticed that there was a police car hiding behind some bushes just round the corner. I made sure I was driving at the right speed because I had no wish to have *the book thrown at me* by some worthy judge. At long last I reached home and settled down in my favourite armchair. I thought *I'd take a leaf out that chap's book* I'd seen in the TV advertisement, who very coolly sits down, takes a sip



of his drink and then opens his book with a pleasurable sigh. *In my book* he looks a bit stupid but then so was I because my eye alighted on a bright blue cover in a bookshelf to my left.

I'd already got a copy of the wretched book.

### 39. Greeting expressions or «Well, hello!»

Not so long ago the word «cheers» was reserved for when you raised your glass and drank to someone's health and the other person or the others if it was a group responded with another «cheers». A variation of the word also crops up in the word «cheerio», which is a friendly way of saying «good-bye». And of course they're all related to the word «cheer» - which has a very old meaning of «comfort» as in the archaic expression «be of good cheer» - roughly meaning «be happy/comfortable». Again we can try and «cheer someone up» - help them to feel «cheerful/happy». And also if we're watching our favourite tennis player or team, we can «cheer» them by shouting out enthusiastically when they're doing well. So as you can see it's a busy little word and as you can't keep a good word down, it's come back in force as «cheers» and in the UK you might think it was the most popular word in the language because you hear it endlessly. When a sales assistant hands you something to sign it is used, when you sign it and hand it back, it's used again. If you hold a door open for someone, up it comes. Even if you accidentally knock into someone in the street and step aside, the recipient of your accidental knock will probably say it and just to show you meant no harm you say it too. To someone of the older generation returning to the UK after a long absence it might seem every member of the population was spending their time drinking.

That's the trouble. There is a very limited vocabulary used for the ordinary day-to-day salutations and certain words seem to do all the work. The strangest thing of all is when you are introduced to someone. A says «How do you do?» And then B says «How do you do?» as well. The result is that two questions are left hanging in the air and unanswered. But then the English tend to be reticent in other forms of typical conversation. A says «Thank you» and B just grins and says nothing. If the thanking is very effusive and goes on, there are one or two expressions you can employ: «You're welcome» or «Don't mention it» and if you really don't feel too talkative you could simply say «Not at all». Now in many languages this just isn't good enough and there are set expressions that you use in your response.

More problems come in the business of what you say when you meet someone out in the street. Of course if you are a coward, you could «cut them dead» - totally ignore them - but then that is a bit rude and isn't a good idea. «Hi» is becoming a firm favourite in the street, on the telephone and of course as a way of starting your email. «Hello» is a close runner up and both are clearly informal. More formal ways of greeting come in the following way: «Good morning/afternoon/evening». But again people tend to use these expressions when addressing a group or an audience. If you are very surprised to see someone in an unusual place there is another expression. You might be taking a stroll through the Gobi desert and suddenly you meet your next-door neighbour. Now «Hi» or «Hello» would be inappropriate and it would be better to say «Fancy seeing you here!» In the countryside where everybody is not so busy rushing about as in the town meeting a stranger in a lane would probably require a «Good» something just to be polite even if the

recipient is a total stranger. That reminds me of a student of mine some years ago when I was teaching in central London. She was a young and very sociable girl from the West Indies. At home she lived in a very small village where everybody knew everybody else. What she couldn't understand at first was why nobody reciprocated her bright «Good morning» to everybody she met during the rush hour on the London underground stations. She soon learnt that people in big cities hurrying to work aren't a friendly lot.

Then of course there are words you use when you part, go away, leave. In a previous century you might use the very dramatic «Farewell» but please don't say that when you've just bought a newspaper and are leaving the shop - they might start talking about you. «Good-bye» or simply «bye» are the favourites. «See you» is popular too and one that intrigues me because in most cases it is never fulfilled «See you later». Becoming even more common and perhaps this is a sign of the dangerous times we live in is «Take care». Following up a question raised in our Internet Forum recently to do with «last night» and «yesterday evening» where the former is very late and possibly after bedtime and the latter is prior to that, what do we say as a salutation at the end of the day particularly if it's dark? You can of course fall back on «Hi» and «Hello» but somehow darkness seems to call for formality and «Good evening» would be right and if it's very late, «Good night» would be fine. And now I've got to find a way to finish this newsletter - oh I know «CHEERS!»

## 40. Sea expressions

Let's start with three 'Sea Expressions':

- All at sea
- Sea change
- Sea of faces

If you live in Britain, as I do, it doesn't take long to realise that whatever direction you take, it isn't long before you reach the sea. And of course if you don't like flying, as I don't, and you want to travel to another country, you have to cross that strip of water between England and France called the Channel. It will come as no surprise therefore that this mass of water we call 'sea' and all the things people do on it have had a great influence on daily language.

In terms of expressions where the word 'sea' itself appears, the emphasis is on its great size. After all more of the earth is covered with water than land and it wasn't that long ago when people thought that once you went over the horizon in your boat, you fell off the end of the world!

Imagine that you've just started in a new job and only a few days later you find yourself alone in your place of work. Then the telephone rings and you very nervously answer it. You get asked lots of questions. You don't know the answers and you don't know where anything is kept. You are totally confused and can't help the caller – 'You are all at sea.'

At lunchtime you feel you must have something to eat after all the problems you've had and you go into the firm's canteen. The trouble is that as you're new, you don't know anyone and the place is full of hundreds of people and you think they're all looking at you. You go down the stairs and can see this enormous number of unknown faces – 'a sea of faces'.

Let me finish with an expression some hundreds of years old created by our greatest national poet, Shakespeare, which is still very much in use today. When we want to talk about a dramatic alteration taking place that affects many people like for example the ending of apartheid in South Africa, we call this in Shakespeare's words – 'a sea change.' And now as it's high summer, I'd like to go for a long walk in the countryside but I can't really because as well as being surrounded by sea in this small island, we have a few problems with another mass of water inland too – in other words it's raining!

## 41. Head expressions

Now that the New Year has started, I wonder how many of the resolutions that I described in the last newsletter you are sticking to. As I mentioned at the end of that letter I said I'd decide to be more decisive and my decision is that I shan't be making any! This could be interpreted as «burying my head in the sand» — refusing to accept a situation and choosing to ignore it. And that brings me to an interesting topic concerning the use of that clever little four letter word «head». Not surprisingly considering how important it is to the rest of our anatomy, you can imagine how often it occurs in expressions in English.

If you simply make no progress in an argument or you try to do something again and again without success you find yourself «banging your head against a brick wall» — not something to be recommended. The other end of the head, in a manner of speaking is the tail. So if you are trying to put together a piece of furniture that has been delivered to your house in a so called flat pack and it just doesn't make sense because part 24 simply won't fit into part 56, you may well find that you «can't make head nor tail of it». In the end you decide to toss a coin in the air and agree in advance that the side it lands on will dictate what you do next. You ask yourself the question: «Heads or tails»?

The head of course is at the top and is an indication of the sort of person you are... You can be said to have «your head screwed on the right way» — you are sensible. To «have a good head on your shoulders» means you are not only sensible but also clever at the same time. When people say you «have a good head for figures», they mean you are good at mathematics or you can work out how much tax you ought to pay. If you don't panic, then you «have a level head or are levelheaded». And that last word illustrates one of the fascinating or if you like confusing things about the language in that what you thought was a simple straightforward noun can suddenly take on another grammatical function. «Where are you headed/heading»? Means where are you going/in what direction are you going? This year people in the United States are wondering which presidential candidate is «heading for victory». The unfortunate ship The Titanic «was heading for disaster» because it was about to crash into a huge iceberg. Then again this word pops up as an adjective «heady». We use this to describe something exhilarating, intoxicating or elating. You would expect a «heady argument» to come from the mouth of Einstein. If you drink too much of a «heady wine», it might well «go to your head» (affect your clarity of thinking) or make you feel confused so that you don't know whether you're «on your head or your feet».

Apart from being sensible or able, you can also show to others another side of your behaviour. You can (and I'm not too sure how this is physically possible) «talk through the back of your head» — talk nonsense. Then people might say as a result that your «need your head examining» or that you are completely crazy and you are «off your head». Comments like that made to the sensitive may have

them «hang their heads» — feel ashamed. Other emotions can also play their part. A couple are «head over heels in love» — deeply in love with each other. Their two sets of parents perhaps «put their heads together» (discuss the situation), «scratch their heads» (can't understand why their children feel as they do) think the two of them are «weak in the head» (not thinking properly), want to «knock the love affair on the head» (put a stop to it) but remembering that they too were young once, decide to «give them their head» (let them do what they want).

«Off the top of my head» (without further research or thought), I was going to say that's it but I'd forgotten the expressions to do with the removal of the head. «Talking your head off» is to talk incessantly. After an investigation into bad practices within a company or organisation when certain individuals have been found guilty and they find themselves in serious trouble, then the general feeling is that «heads will roll» — they will lose their jobs. And finally when you panic and act in a stupid way, you could be described as «losing your head». And this is what happened to Charles 1st (King of England, Scotland and Ireland 1600—1649) who rather foolishly wanted to rule without Parliament and caused the Civil War. Poor chap he lost his head both metaphorically and literally — he had his head cut off.

## 42. Expressions with the word order or «Order into chaos»

In this story you will find words and expressions in the first half to do with *order*, *tidiness* and *correctness* but in the second half you will find their opposite — words and expressions to do with *disorder*.

That is why I have called this story

### «Order into chaos»

Maurice Carpenter used to love *order*. Everything had to be *in its place*. You only had to look at his desk to realise that; there were three rows of pencils *all lined up*, two rows of pens and a pad of paper *dead centre* in the middle of his desk. Everything you could say was *in apple pie order*. His appearance also gave you a clue to his fondness for *fastidiousness*. His head was immaculate as there wasn't a hair *out of place*. His tie, as he always wore one even on holiday, was totally *symmetrical*.

Maurice had a very important job, at least he thought so. He worked for the district council as one of the planning officers. He and his colleagues had the responsibility to check whether the local residents had submitted plans for alterations to their houses correctly. Whereas the other two were fairly lenient, Maurice was a *nitpicker*, which is another word for a *fusspot*, which is another word for someone who insists that every detail is correct and *all the «i's» are dotted and all the «t's» are crossed*. People would sometimes have to wait weeks for a decision if their plans were not correct *down to the last detail*. He inherited this liking for precision from his father whose favourite saying was «*There's a place for everything and everything has its place.*» He grew up knowing where everything was in the house. As a result nothing was ever lost or misplaced. His long-suffering mother *knew her place* as well. Heaven forbid if she didn't lay the cutlery in the right way at mealtimes. If a fork or a knife were even slightly *askew*, there would be a long lecture about *tidiness*. Correct car parking was another obsession that Maurice inherited from his father. Whenever he went shopping in a large supermarket, he would take down the numbers of those cars that were not *properly aligned* within the white lines and report them to reception. Most of the receptionists knew him and assured him the matter would be reported and then did nothing about it. At work he would also accept what his boss told him even when he really disagreed. He never *stepped out of line*. His boss knew he could rely on him to *toe the line* on every occasion. But all this stopped one hot July morning 3 years ago.

At *precisely* 8.36 Maurice arrived at work having parked his car in his special space and having assured himself that the car was *bang in the middle*. As he walked into his office he saw a young woman sitting by his desk. At first glance he thought how *untidy* and *dishevelled* she was. She was the complete antithesis of what a young woman should look like. Her hair was *a mess*, for starters. Her jacket was *crumpled* as well. Maurice found it difficult not to tut tut

aloud at her *unkempt appearance* at least from the back. When he came to sit at his desk and see her from the front, something inside him snapped. He felt strange and this to him was totally out of order because he didn't usually take much notice of young women in the office especially if they looked as *disorderly* as she did. But she did have wonderfully blue eyes and a dazzling smile though perhaps her lower lip was a little *lopsided*. She had come, she explained to query a decision about the garage she wanted to be built next to her house. As she *clumsily* argued her case, Maurice found he was not listening but gazing into her bright blue eyes. His thoughts for the first time in his life were *jumbled* and *chaotic*. At the end of her explanation he found himself agreeing to her objection and even against his will he was asking her out. Within weeks they were engaged and not long after they married in a small church with a *crooked* spire, which actually made Maurice laugh. They now have two children whose toys lie *higgledy-piggledy* over the floor. They run *helter-skelter* to meet visitors. I say «they» but in fact the younger one runs up to you in a *zigzag* fashion, the older one walks *sedately*. His mother is convinced that the latter will make an ideal planning officer. She said this once in front of him and almost as if he understood, he walked up to his mother and tried to straighten her *tousled* hair.



### 43. Expressions with the word name or «The name of the game»

The parents of a very good friend of mine decided to give as their son's second name the word we use for the current month — August. Naturally as a child he tended to keep quiet about it and now only uses it as an initial in his signature, which is probably the best thing to do. Mind you girls' names are different. April, May and June are quite pleasant to the ear and you forget that they are also the names of months. And that's the funny thing about names. We tend to associate a particular personality with a specific name although we could be completely wrong. A celebrated case in point concerns a certain Dr Mudd. The American President Lincoln was shot by a man named Booth, who broke his leg trying to escape and got medical help from a country doctor called Samuel Mudd. Mudd was quite unaware what Booth had done and gave him appropriate treatment. The next day he informed the police and despite his ignorance of the assassination at the time, he was arrested, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. Fortunately he was pardoned 4 years later but the poor doctor's name has gone into the language and to say to someone: «Your name's mud» (the extra «d» has now disappeared) means that you have a bad reputation. «To clear your name» is to prove that you were not involved in a crime of which you were accused. This finally happened to our doctor friend Samuel but not until the 1970's. In fact «giving someone or something a bad name» is to damage their reputation. So if a company is known to make faulty products, then this will give it a bad name.

On the positive side you can of course get well known for your great ability or success. If an actress has been applauded not only by audiences but also by the critics, she is said to be «making a name for herself». There are those who love to impress others with the people they know or have met. They possibly know that famous actress — well they know someone who knows her but they like to give the impression that they know famous people and like to mention these names in the course of a conversation. This harmless pursuit is known as «namedropping». I once had a conversation with a previous Prime Minister of the UK when he visited the college where I was the deputy principal and couldn't resist telling people about this whenever I could. That gentleman is now out of favour and people have started «calling him names» (being rude about him) and so I don't mention him at all now. But then that's what happens in politics — «that's the name of the game» — that's the central thing about that kind of profession.

Magic plays a part in these expressions, too. Some people are universally respected and their name alone evokes all kinds of favourable feelings. It can be in sport, in show business or indeed in manufacturing. This is said to be «a name to conjure with» and when you mention it, everyone is impressed. And on the negative side of this that very name can be used in a disrespectful way very often in religious contexts where the leader of a religion is spoken of in an abusive way and that's what we call «taking someone's name in vain». This expression can be found in the English translation of the

Bible: «They were punished for taking the Lord's name in vain».

Let's end on a romantic note, which I am afraid is linked with tragedy. When a young couple decide to get married, everyone wants to know when the wedding will be — that's when «they name the day». This is what one of the most famous young couples in history wanted to do — Romeo and Juliet but tragedy intervened because they both die before this can happen. And it all had to do with names. They both came from different families the Montagues and the Capulets, who were deadly rivals. And here I have to revert to my favourite poet, William Shakespeare, who in the words of his hero Romeo has him say that names are not important and need not divide Romeo and Juliet:

«What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.»

#### 44. Usage of the word chip or «Potatoes»

Let's start with a little puzzle - a not very difficult one. Which four-letter word starts with a "c" and ends in a "p" and has a salutation in the middle? Allow a little time for reflection although it's not really needed. And the answer is "chip". It's only small but it's a clever little word. We can use it to describe a small piece missing from a piece of china or ceramics because someone has knocked it. The expression just like a chip off the old block describes a child who has the same characteristics as one of their parents. The old block is presumably Mama or Papa. Then again it also appears as a small slice of potato, which comes in different thicknesses. The really posh ones are very slender and restaurants that don't really like the word chips on their menu, refer to them as French fries. There is even a British Potato Council - just imagine. I bet they have French fries at their lunches. The humble potato arrived in England from Virginia in 1584 and was sent there by Sir Walter Raleigh (1552 - 1682) who also introduced tobacco to England. He was a great favourite of the Queen and just to show what a splendid chap he was he threw his cloak down once over a puddle in the ground so that the Queen wouldn't get her royal toes wet. Unfortunately when the King (James 1st) came to the throne, he fell out of favour and had his head cut off. Seems a bit tough but then potatoes do make you fat and cigarettes as they keep telling us, can seriously damage your health! In fact we have an expression for someone who sits around all day watching the TV and doing nothing but eat and drink and that's a couch potato. In 1962 the playwright, Arnold Wesker (born 1932) wrote a play describing his experience based on his military service called Chips with Everything, which has come into the language as describing a passion people have for insisting that every meal has to be accompanied by the sliced up potato.

But let's leave the potato for the moment and come back to other uses of the word chip. It can also describe those small tokens used to represent money in a casino. If someone cashes in their chips, that means they have died - it's all over. If you've had your chips, that doesn't mean you've just polished off a plate of French fries but that you've failed in your task and have now no chance of success. When the chips are down again is back to the gambling table when you've piled all the tokens on the table, this is the moment of truth and you have reached a critical stage in your life or in a business situation. Now the chip I really like is the chip on the shoulder - not the one you're thinking with someone standing there with a tomato stained chip perched on their shoulder - this refers to having a feeling of inferiority. In this country we have a bit of a chip on our shoulder about one particular sport - tennis because we haven't had a male champion tennis player since goodness knows how long. He went by the name of Fred Perry and he became one in 1936, a good year that! But this chip on the shoulder is made of wood. Apparently it comes from a former American custom. A young man who was desperate to have a fight with anyone would place a chip - a wooden one this time - on his shoulder and challenge anyone to knock it off his shoulder. This clever little word can also enter the lists of the phrasal verb community. If you chip in with a comment, you

interrupt a conversation and make your remark. If you chip away at a problem, you keep on trying to find a solution to the difficulty. One more phrasal verb - chip in - that's what people do when they make a financial contribution to show their appreciation for the coach driver when they've come to the end of a tour.

But then we mustn't forget THE chip. That's the one that enables me to write to you and for you to read what I've written - the electronic chip inside our computers and I quote courtesy of St Google:

Improvements in electronic chip manufacturing techniques have seen the number of components per electronic chip double on average every two years for the past thirty years. This has meant that the computing power of chips has grown enormously, and has been principally responsible for the huge improvements we have been enjoying in consumer items such as computers, game boxes, mobile phones and TVs, and also services such as Internet and telephone.

Well, I started with a puzzle and now I'll end with a pun and an apology: What do you say to the shop that has sold you a piece of furniture which when it's been delivered to your home and you've unpacked it, you discover has been badly chipped down one side? Now look here, you say, "you know I'm on a diet and I don't take chips with anything!"

## 45. Usage of the word learn or «Learning to learn?»

I'm going to go all academic on you in this newsletter and kick off with a dash of religion. So be warned! I'll start the ball rolling with a quotation from the Church of England Book Of Common Prayer, which first saw the light of day in 1662. In this book there are so-called collects or prayers and they are called that because people collected together and listened to the prayer for a particular day. Bear with me and I'll come to the point very soon. I am about to tell you the collect for the second Sunday in Advent. Advent means arrival and refers to the coming of Christ starting with the first Sunday nearest to 30th November and lasts until Christmas Day. On this second Sunday the priest tells the congregation to pay attention to the words in the Bible – the exact words are: Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest. Not a bad slogan for our readers really. So at last we've got there and I do hope you're still with me and have seen the connection with the title and that word in the quotation – learn. Keep that in mind then as we go on about 25 years to 1688, which saw the birth of the poet, Alexander Pope. Now little Alex had a very tough time as a child and was ill for most of his childhood. As a result the poor chap was deformed and dwarfed. But by all accounts he had a lovely face. Our Alex packed a lot in before he died in 1744 becoming a poet, satirist, letter writer, and essayist and not only did he design gardens but he had a go at designing grottos as well. In 1709 he wrote his essay on Criticism. It is in this essay that we find the much quoted (and also frequently misquoted but I won't confuse you with the wrong bits now) lines: A little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring: there shallow draughts intoxicate the brain and drinking largely sobers us again. Let me explain what he's on about. The Pierian spring (in Macedonia) is where you went to drink if you needed knowledge in ancient times. Alexander is telling us to take large gulps of the water because if you only take little sips, you won't think straight and he comes up with that winning line that a little learning is a dangerous thing'. You know who he's referring to, don't you? It's those people, mentioning no names of course, who think they know the answer to everything but really they only know half the thing and that's why they can be dangerous. As you have gathered, I'm homing in on the words 'learn' and 'learning'. And it's surprising how often this word and all its relatives crop up in text and conversation.

An expression that comes from working at sea where ropes and the tying of them played an important part in the life of a sailor in the days of sailing ships as you had to know which rope to pull to raise the sails is learn the ropes. Today we use that to mean start to learn about a new job. If we then have to learn new tasks very quickly to keep up with everyone else we say: We are on a steep learning curve. There is also a slight difference between learn to and learn how to. We learn to speak a foreign language (we acquire the knowledge of the words) and we learn how to drive a car (we acquire the knowledge of how to use the pedals and the steering wheel). In the UK people learning how to drive a car have a plate on the back and front of the car displaying a large red letter 'L' on a white background. This is a warning to the rest of us not to get too near.

In the dark ages when I took my driving test (I won't tell you how many times I tried) you had to learn by heart – learn and keep in your memory – all the rules and regulations about driving on public roads. Now people have to take a written test about this. You can also learn by rote whereby you repeat what you hear or read again and again and thus learn it as we say parrot fashion. Two more uses of learn with prepositions: We learn of the result of an election – we find this information out from say, the news. We learn about the important figures in our history at school – our teachers tell us about them. If we find ourselves in an unusual situation that we never forget, we call this a learning experience and that will have an effect on our character. People who have done wrong and after being punished for this wrongdoing decide not to do it again are said to have learned their lesson . I could have said 'learnt' as an alternative. There's been a lot of discussion about the differences between British and American English on our Internet forums and I've just consulted one of my more recent reference books and discovered that the use of 'learnt' in American English is 'as rare as hen's teeth'. Now there's a good expression to remember. Of course we can only use the two-syllable form learn-ed when we're talking about the professor who's very knowledgeable and academic.

Well, I don't know about you but I think it's time to lie down in a darkened room and relax after all this 'learning'. I'll end with a popular expression we use when we come across something new and unexpected suggesting that we can always learn something new every day: Well, we all live and learn. Conversely of course the cynic might add: Some of us just live!

## 46. Usage of the word turn or «My turn»

If you look through the topics raised in the forums of [www.english-test.net](http://www.english-test.net) and in particular the one headed: English Vocabulary, Grammar and Idioms, it won't take you long to find a question about phrasal verbs. These are without doubt the trickiest, nastiest, sneakiest devices that ever a learner of English has to put up with. There I've just used one. Honestly I couldn't help it. The reason why these constructions are so disliked is because they have no logic in them. What about the verb take - a nice quiet and unassuming verb that would, you'd think, never step out of line? But add off or on or up to it and this verb that wouldn't normally say boo to a goose suddenly gets ideas above its station and creates a fistful of new meanings. Then when we try to explain what they all mean, it gets very complicated. With that in mind I thought I'd just take one of these apparently innocuous verbs, add a few prepositions (or particles as grammarians like to call them) to it and show what they mean in a short story. The chosen verb is turn and it's all about when I got myself a part-time job during a vacation when I was a student:

Most students have to or try to earn a little extra by getting a holiday job. They turn aside from (leave behind) their studies and experience the real world for a short while. One long hot summer I turned to (undertook) waiting as my method of getting cash. Perhaps I should turn that word 'waiting' into (change it into) a more specific explanation. I mean being a waiter in a hotel. I had of course turned my hand to (tried) many jobs during the vacation periods but waiting was certainly the most arduous. As hotel guests have little else to do but eat, they are constantly in need of being waited upon. The one hotel that hadn't turned down (rejected) my application (it was a very popular job in that part of the country) was situated right in the middle of a forest and as you turned into (walked up) the drive and saw the rolling hills all around you, it felt like the middle of nowhere. It had been a very large private house that had been turned into (converted into) a small hotel for twenty-five guests. The new owners had had to turn out (tidy) all the rooms which were full of old junk accumulated over a period of sixty years as well having to turn out (remove) a tramp who had lived in an upstairs room for two years without the knowledge of the old lady who was the original owner. The tramp turned out (was later discovered) to be a distant relative but hadn't liked to mention his presence to the old lady as she was stone deaf.

When I turned up (arrived) for my first day at work, the hotel had already been flourishing for five years. They were so successful that they were always turning down (refusing) bookings and even turning people away (telling them to leave) from the house who turned up (came to the hotel) on the off chance. Most of the residents were quite elderly and they all invariably turned in (went to bed) early most evenings. During their waking hours they made up for the quietness at night by demanding drinks, refreshments, newspapers and anything that they could think of. The waiting was done by me and Doris, who should have turned it in (stopped working) years ago

and been a guest there herself on the strength of her age alone but as she frequently told me, she had no intention of turning into (changing into) an old fogey.

I suppose serving breakfast was the most difficult task to turn your hand to (perform) because there were so many variations of drink, cereal, egg and toast. You had to stand there for ages as each guest made up their mind, turning over (considering) the choices in their minds. After a long wait like that very frequently they would turn down (refuse) everything and simply ask for a cup of tea. One morning an old lady turned up at (reached) the dining room sat down, sniffed at the air full of breakfast smells, got up, turned around (went the other way) and walked out again. Apparently she had completely forgotten that she'd already eaten breakfast that day. I turned aside (looked the other way) to hide my smile but Doris caught me at it. 'Don't you turn your nose up at the old dears', (Don't you behave in a superior way) she rebuked me. 'You'll be like that one day. Just you wait.' I turned back (went again to where she was) to apologise but she'd already turned her back on me (ignored me) and gone back to the kitchen. She rather turned against (was not very friendly to) me after that. With that experience of course I learnt a little bit about being a waiter but also more importantly a little about life.



## 47. Usage of the word talk or «Small talk»

I imagine it must be a nightmare for an interviewer on live radio or TV who has to interview someone who will only give very short answers and be, as it were, annoyingly monosyllabic. Take this. QUESTION: Tell me minister in view of the recent developments we have been told about the negotiations you have been having with other world leaders, do you believe there will soon be a settlement? ANSWER: No. Or take this. QUESTION: It has come to the attention of certain journalists that you are intending to take early retirement and start a new career in music. Is there any truth in this? ANSWER: No comment. See what I mean? Then there is also the other extreme when interviewees just won't stop talking and the luckless interviewer can't get a word in edgeways and that's called rather unpleasantly, verbal diarrhea. I'll leave you to work that one out!

Of course there are those who simply find it difficult to make conversation with their fellow creatures. This is supposed to be a characteristic of the English. You can live half a lifetime next door to someone and rarely have any sort of conversation with them. It reminds me of I time when I spent the best part of a year commuting. travelling back and forth, from a town on the south coast to London. It was usually the same group of people getting the same train at the same time each morning and likewise on the way home back to the seaside. Conversation was at a premium, in fact it was non-existent. Then one day on my return journey, one of the 'regulars' bounded into the compartment I was sitting in and yelled at me: What's the score? Now I knew he was talking about the cricket score but I can't stand the game and out of pure devilment, I replied: What score are you talking about? By the look of sheer horror on his face, you would think I had uttered a blasphemy. He glared at me, flounced out of the compartment and went into another one. And that was my sole 'chat' with any of my fellow passengers for the entire twelve months. We call this type of conversation that many people throughout the world indulge in with people you don't know (except of course in the UK) when you pass the time of day with them, small talk.

British Telecommunications, BT for short and in its own words a leading provider of communications solutions serving customers throughout the world, has latched on to this all important word 'talk', doubled it and called one of its services Talk Talk, which is a scheme whereby you get a special rate if you use your phone at certain times. BT probably got the double barrelled idea from other types of expression for making conversation - powwow - chitchat - yackety-yack and my favourite, tittle-tattle for that special kind of gossipy conversation. Oh and then there's that lovely verb (totally unrelated but I couldn't resist mentioning it) chinwag, conjuring up the idea of having a nice friendly conversation. On a loftier note there is that famous remark by Winston Churchill, very pertinent to the world today, that talking to other countries is preferable to going to war with them:

"To jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war. June 26, 1954"

But back to the word 'talk' It crops up all over the place. In fact a common question on one of the forums at [www.english-test.net](http://www.english-test.net) (I am referring in particular to the one called English Teacher Explanations) is: What's the difference between speaking and talking? I usually reply that speaking is saying words and talking is having a conversation and so if you're a good student you don't talk while the teacher is speaking.

Then 'talk' has another personality, too. They say money talks - that if you want to influence and impress, money will do that for you. You can also do some straight talking which means that you speak your mind and don't worry what other people say. That happens on our forums as well especially in the one called: What do you want to talk about? The thing we don't really like and I'm sure it doesn't happen very often is when people adopt a superior attitude and talk down to others. Then sometimes it gets technical and there are those who only talk about their work to one another and the rest of us are excluded. You know the kind of thing when linguists start throwing phonetic symbols at each other - well if you do that, you are talking shop. We mustn't forget that talking can also be undertaken by those who in our opinion are just spouting nonsense although they are convinced it makes pure sense. This is expressed with two colourful idioms: talking through your hat and talking through the back of your head. The latter I should think is very painful. At the beginning I mentioned the person who couldn't stop talking in an interview. Those who have that complaint are said to be talking nineteen to the dozen or talking their heads off or even (and don't ask me where this comes from) talking the hind leg off a donkey. Finally in memory of all those birds that had to be slaughtered at a farm in the East of England because of the dreaded avian flu, I have to mention talk turkey, which is when you talk openly and honestly in your business deals.

Now all I have to say is: 'Nice talking to you'. Unlike many of my fellow countrymen and women, as you can see, I don't mind indulging in a bit of small talk.