

25 Everyday Conversation Phrases

In this lesson, we're going to look at 25 British English phrases you'll hear in daily conversations. We're focusing on real words and expressions people actually use in the UK, not the outdated and formal ones you might find in textbooks. From idioms to common expressions, we've covered everything to help make your English sound smooth and natural.

Conversation: Part 1

Let's get started with the lesson. Here are my 25 everyday British English conversation phrases in context. Many of them will be used in other varieties of English, too, but all of them are common in British English.

Ollie: Hey, Rose!

Rose: Hi, Ollie! What are you up to today?

Ollie: Nothing much. Do you want to hang out?

Rose: Yeah, I'd love to. What do you fancy doing?

Ollie: **I'm easy.** I'll do whatever.

Rose: **It's glorious out.** How about a picnic?

Ollie: **Can do.**

Rose: I'll make some sausage rolls. They'll **go down a treat.** And I picked up some scones from Martha's yesterday. I'll pack those for dessert. They always **hit the spot** with a nice cup of tea.

Ollie: Scones at Martha's are at least 3 quid each - **daylight robbery** if you ask me. You could've made them for a lot cheaper.

Rose: But they're delicious!

Ollie: Oh no, I bet they've got raisins in them, haven't they? **I've got a thing about** raisins. I don't like the texture. **Give me** a nice plain scone **any day.**



● VOCABULARY

1. **I'm easy.** idiom /aɪm 'i:zi/ - 'I don't mind' or 'I am easy to please'
 - What do you fancy for dinner?
 - **I'm easy.**

2. **It's beautiful out.** /ɪts 'bju:tɪfl aʊt/ **It's glorious outside** /ɪts 'glɔ:riəs ,aʊt'saɪd/ - it's really nice weather
 - We should go to the park. **It's glorious outside!**

3. **Can do.** phrase /kæn du:/ - a very common response when someone asks you if you want to do something and you don't want to say 'yes', but it's rude to say 'no'
 - Shall we go to the cinema tonight?
 - **Can do.** (Erm... no!)

4. **to go down a treat** idiom /,gəʊ daʊn ə 'tri:t/ - to enjoy something very much
 - Dad's pasta salad always **goes down a treat** at parties.

5. **sth. hits the spot** idiom /hɪts ðə spɒt/ - sth. is exactly what is needed or has the effect it should
 - A glass of lemonade with lots of ice always **hits the spot** on a hot day.

6. **daylight robbery** n /,deɪlaɪt 'rɒbəri/ - used to describe a situation when something costs a lot more than we think it should
 - I had to pay £4 for a bottle of water — **daylight robbery!**

7. **to have a thing about sth./sb.** idiom /hæv ə θɪŋ ə'baʊt/ - you love or hate someone or something, sometimes in a way that isn't reasonable
 - He's **got a thing about** chickens. He's terrified of them.

Note:

This is often 'highway robbery' in North American English.



8. **Give me ... any day.** idiom /gɪv mi: 'eni deɪ/ - I much prefer this to whatever you just mentioned
- Her new music's fine but **give me** her stuff from the '80s **any day**.

Conversation: Part 2

Rose: Well, that's **thrown a spanner in the works**. I've bought a dozen. How about we invite Kam and Parvati? They can help **make a dent** in my scone supply.

Ollie: Ooh, I don't know about that. **A little bird told me** they've had a big bust-up.

Rose: What?! I haven't heard about this. **Spill!**

Ollie: Apparently, Kam's been seeing someone at work.

Rose: Nooo! I thought Kam was **a keeper**.

Ollie: Yeah, **you and me both**.

Rose: Poor Parvati, she must be **absolutely gutted**.

Ollie: Yeah, well. It is what it is.

Rose: Wow, sympathetic **much?!**

● VOCABULARY

9. **to throw a spanner in the works** idiom /θrəʊ (w) ə 'spænə(r) ɪn ðə wɜ:kz/ - to cause problems that delay a plan or stop it from succeeding
- The sudden downpour really **threw a spanner in the works** for our picnic.

Lucy's Tip!

In American English, you'll often hear 'wrench' or 'monkey wrench' used in place of 'spanner'. In this idiom, Americans say, 'to throw a **wrench** in the works.'

10. **to make/put a dent in sth.** idiom /meɪk/pʊt ə dent ɪn/ - to reduce the amount of something, often used to talk about money or work
- I've been working for hours, but I've hardly **made a dent** in my to-do list.
11. **a little bird told me** idiom /ə 'lɪtl bɜːd təʊld miː/ - used to say that you heard a piece of information from somebody but you don't want to say who
- **A little bird told me** you're thinking about quitting your job.
12. **Spill!** v /spɪl/ - a shortened form of the idioms '**to spill the beans**' or '**to spill the tea!**' meaning to tell somebody a secret or the latest gossip
- Have you heard what happened to Javier yesterday?
 - No! **Spill!**
13. **a keeper** n /ə 'kiːpə/ - somebody who has good qualities who you could have a long-term relationship with
- Jamie's been so supportive while my dad's been in hospital.
 - Aw, he's **a keeper**.
14. **You and me both.** phrase
/ju (w) ən miː bæʊθ/ - a common expression used to agree with somebody
- I'm absolutely exhausted today.
 - **You and me both.** My son was up all night.
15. **absolutely gutted** phrase /'æbsəluːtli 'gʌtɪd/ - very disappointed or sad
- I was **absolutely gutted** when my team didn't make it to the final.
16. **It is what it is.** idiom /ɪt ɪz wɒt ɪt ɪz/ - accepting a situation as it is without trying to change it
- Do you know what? **It is what it is.**
Let's talk about something else.
17. **much** determiner /mʌtʃ/ - emphasises what was said, often in a funny way
- You've been talking about your new game for an hour. Obsessed **much**?!
 - Wow, that's a lot of food. Hungry **much**?!

Note:

We can also use 'a keeper' to refer to objects.

The **Flap T** is when the /t/ sound is pronounced like a soft /d/. It is common in many North American accents.



Conversation: Part 3

Ollie: What do you want me to do about it?! Anyway, **do you think it's going to rain later?** The forecast said it might **brighten up**, but **better take a brolly** just in case.

Rose: I don't think it's going to rain. But if it does, we'll **cross that bridge when we come to it**.

Ollie: Do we really need to plan something today? Can't we just **play it by ear?**

Rose: Ugh, **for a split second**, I thought I'd actually convinced you to get out of the house. **I'm not being funny, but** I only get one day off a week. I don't want to waste it. Maybe you can come up with something.

Ollie: I'll **have a think**.

● VOCABULARY

18. **Do you think it's going to rain later?** /dʒu θɪŋk its 'gənə reɪn 'leɪtə/

This is a fairly easy question but I had to put it in this video. I say this **every day!** There is always a chance it'll rain later in the UK.

19. **to brighten up** phr v /,braɪtn 'ʌp/ - to become brighter

- There were lots of grey clouds on the day of my wedding, but it brightened up later on.

20. **Better take a brolly.** /'betə teɪk ə 'brɒli/ - I/You/We should take an umbrella.

- The clouds are moving in. **Better take a brolly!**

Lucy's Tip!

The phrase 'you had better', often shortened to 'better', is used to give advice or to suggest that something is a good idea, often because there will be negative consequences if the advice is not followed.



21. **to cross that bridge when one comes/gets to it** idiom /krɒs θæt brɪdʒ wen wʌn kʌmz/gets/ tu (w) ɪt/ - to deal with a problem when it becomes necessary rather than worrying about it in advance
- If you want to give up work after the baby's born, you can. We'll have less money, but we'll **cross that bridge when we come to it**.
22. **to play it by ear** idiom /pleɪ (j) ɪt baɪ (j) ɪə/ - to deal with a situation without a fixed plan, deciding what to do as events happen
- I think there will be about 20 students in the class but there could be a lot more. We'll just have **to play it by ear**.
23. **for a split second** phrase /fə(r) ə ˌsplɪt 'sekənd/ - for a very short period of time
- I thought I'd lost my purse **for a split second**, but I found it at the very bottom of my bag.
24. **I'm not being funny but...** phrase /aɪm nɒt 'bi:ɪŋ 'fʌni bʌt/ - used before a statement or opinion, often when we want to be honest but don't want to offend someone
- **I'm not being funny but** could you hurry up? The bus is about to leave.
25. **to have a think** idiom /hæv ə θɪŋk/ - to take some time to consider something
- You don't have to buy it now. **Have a think**, and call me tomorrow.

Lucy's Tip!

Delexical verbs, like 'to have' in this idiom, are verbs that do not carry much meaning by themselves in certain contexts. Instead, they rely on their accompanying nouns to express meaning. Delexical verbs are often used in conversational English. Here are some other examples -

take a nap | have a bath | make a choice | take a walk



Dialogue Practice

Ollie: Hey, Rose!

Rose: Hi, Ollie! What are you up to today?

Ollie: Nothing much. Do you want to hang out?

Rose: Yeah, I'd love to. What do you fancy doing?

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Rose: Nooo! I thought Kam was **a keeper.**

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Rose: Poor Parvati, she must be **absolutely gutted.**

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Rose: Wow, sympathetic **much?!**



Ollie: What do you want me to do about it?! Anyway, **do you think it's going to rain later?** The forecast said it might **brighten up**, but **better take a brolly** just in case.

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Ollie: I'll **have a think**.



QUIZ!

Choose the correct word or phrase from the word bank to complete the dialogue.

a. we'll cross that bridge	b. and me both	c. hit the spot	d. a little bird told me	e. absolutely gutted
f. spanner	g. spill	h. It is what it is	i. for a split second	j. dent

Alice: Oh my gosh! Did you hear about Sarah?

Bob: No, (1) _____!

Alice: Well, (2) _____ that she screwed up big time and is planning to just walk out of work today and never come back!

Bob: Are you joking?! She's not going to quit; she's just going to leave? What about all of her accounts?

Alice: That's what I heard! I guess (3) _____ when we get to it.

Bob: I'm not gonna lie; (4) _____, I thought about doing something similar last week, but then reality hit me.

Alice: Well, good on her. Speaking of reality, I've been working on this new customer proposal all morning, and I haven't made a (5) _____ in it.

Bob: You (6) _____. I've been trying to get my project off the ground, but it feels like every time I make a bit of progress, something throws a (7) _____ in the works.

Alice: Oh, I was (8) _____ when I heard Toño cut your funding.

Bob: (9) _____. There's always a new project, innit.

Alice: How about we go and grab a coffee and forget about all this for a bit?

Bob: Coffee would really (10) _____ right now! I'll meet you downstairs.

The End!

© 2014 (8) (7) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1)

