

# WORK GETTING YOU DOWN?

## 1 Non-Literal English – Phrasal Verbs

Check the meaning of any new phrasal verbs. Use them to complete the gaps in the text below. Change forms where necessary.

get away with sth    fight off sth

get sby down    get by    throw up

get sth out of sth    come up with sth

play up    come on    crack on with sth

**TIP:** sth = something    sby = somebody

## 2 Discussion

a) Read about four different employees who are having problems at work:

**Tom, 28, from Luton:** I'm so busy at work normally that I never have enough time to do all my housework, and now my partner's nagging me to **a)** \_\_\_\_\_ a spot of decorating. She's bought the paint and rollers and she's told me I'll have to take a few days off work. I can't think I'll be able to **b)** \_\_\_\_\_ a good enough excuse – or even if I'll **c)** \_\_\_\_\_ – but I don't know who I'm more scared of upsetting – my boss or my girlfriend...

**Gloria, 34, from Stirling:** Last week I rang in sick and pretended I'd been **d)** \_\_\_\_\_ all night, and was suffering from a bad case of diarrhoea. I laid it on thick and I could tell the guy who answered the phone didn't want to hear all the details... I usually tell them that my back's been **e)** \_\_\_\_\_. The real problem is that I'm being bullied at work by one of my colleagues, but I can't discuss it with my line manager, because he's one of her best friends...

**Frank, 36, from Swindon:** I enjoy my job, although I feel that I should be getting paid more, because I've been there for more than ten years. Recently I was told that I wouldn't be getting a pay rise this year, and the staff Christmas party has been cancelled due to lack of funds. Would you believe it!

I sometimes think about quitting and getting a new job, 'cause I don't **i)** \_\_\_\_\_, but all of my friends, you know, are there and I can't be bothered – to be honest – to look for anything different. I guess I'll just have to keep pulling sickies, but I don't really like doing it 'cause I know it's wrong. So... I'm sure they can **j)** \_\_\_\_\_ without me though.

b) Discuss with your partner: what would you do in each situation?

**QUICK FACT > THE AVERAGE WORKER IN THE UK HAS 7 DAYS OFF SICK FROM WORK EACH YEAR**

Source: 2011 Absence management survey report, <http://www.cipd.co.uk/>

(What about you? What is the figure in your country?)



**QUICK FACT > THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF SICK LEAVE IN THE UK IS STRESS**Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/05.10.11>

(Have you ever been off work due to stress?)

## 3 Discussion

Look at the reasons that people sometimes give for being off work sick. Imagine that you are an employer, and say whether you would consider them to be valid excuses or not – and why:

**stomach bug**

I hate my job

I'm being **bullied** at work**food poisoning**

sickness and diarrhoea

I've just **split up** with

my partner

I'm caring for a sick

**relative****flu symptoms**

taking the car to the

garage

**splitting headache**

appointment at

the dentist's

RSI

(repetitive strain injury)

I'm a **lone parent** and

I need to sort out

**something****I've got a migraine**problems with **childcare**crippling **back pain**going to a **job interview****stress****I've earned a long weekend**

## 4 Discussion Words

Look at the words and phrases in **pink type**. Find the **strong-stressed syllable** in each one and circle all of the **Schwa sounds**.

# Sometimes I just fancy a duvet day!

## 5 Pronunciation – Sound Connections

Look at four phrases from the text (in blue). What are the **sound connections** between them? Should we use **intrusion** or **elision**? Explain why, then practise saying them:

a) She's **bought the** paint and rollers...b) **Recently I** was told...c) the guy **who answered** the phone...d) So I phoned in sick on Monday  
and **told them**...

## 6 Role Plays

Work with your partner to create a short role play or dialogue based on each situation in the text. You could imagine each one from the point of view of different characters, e.g. the employee, their boss, their partner, their colleagues, and so on. You could also show what happens next in the situation, or the events that led up to it...

## 7 Sentence Blocks – Present Perfect Passive

Practise the sentence blocks. What time does **present perfect passive** indicate? Why is passive voice used here?

**The staff Christmas party has been cancelled due to lack of funds.**

**what (x2) / why / which**

## Title

“Work getting you down?” is a short question form of the phrasal verb “to get sby down” (see below). It literally means: “Is work making you feel unhappy at the moment?”

## Pictures

**Extensions:** SS describe the pictures and how they are related to the lesson. SS look for other relevant pictures on the internet.

## 1 Non-Literal English – Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal Verb:	Literal Meaning:	Gap:	Form in the Text:
get away with sth	be not caught doing something wrong	c)	get away with it
fight off sth	recover from sth, e.g. an illness or infection	f)	fighting off
get sby down	make somebody feel upset or depressed	h)	getting me down
get by	manage / handle sth / cope	j)	get by
throw up	vomit / be sick	d)	throwing up
get sth out of sth	benefit or profit from doing sth	i)	get anything out of it
come up with sth	think up / invent	b)	come up with
play up	cause discomfort or pain	e)	playing up
come on	start	g)	came on
crack on with sth	a colloquial form of “get on with sth”, meaning to continue working on a project after a break	a)	crack on with

**Extensions:** See Talk a Lot Intermediate Book 1 for more interesting ways to practise phrasal verbs.

## 2 Discussion

b) Answers will vary. Encourage SS to look up any new words and expressions.

**Extensions:** SS could write a formal email or letter to their manager explaining how they feel about their job, and what they would like to change about it.

## 3 Discussion

Answers will vary. Encourage SS to look up any new words and expressions.

**Extensions:** The pair or small group discussion could lead into a wider class debate, with SS putting their views on both sides of the argument, e.g. a zero-tolerance (strict) approach to staff absence versus a more “softly-softly” (lenient) approach. For example, if an employer comes down very hard on somebody who has taken a duvet day, it could be counter-productive in that the employee might start actively looking for another job. But if the employer is too lenient, however, it could lead to further working days being lost due to unnecessary sick leave. SS could research and debate the different points of view.

## 4 Discussion Words

The strong-stressed syllable(s) are underlined. Schwa sounds are indicated in grey type:

stomach bug  
bullied  
food poisoning  
sickness  
diarrhoea  
split up  
relative

flu symptoms  
splitting headache  
appointment  
RSI  
repetitive strain injury  
lone parent

migraine  
childcare  
back pain  
job interview  
stress  
long weekend  
duvet day

**Extensions:** Use the Discussion Word Questions from Talk a Lot Elementary Books 1-3 or Talk a Lot Intermediate Book 1, or use the Big Word Game or Talk a Lot Bingo from Talk a Lot Elementary Handbook. You might decide to focus on the topic of sound connections, which is practised in the next exercise. You can find out more about this topic in Talk a Lot Foundation Course. You could also get SS to put each word or phrase into their own sentence, using a verb form of their (or your) choice.

## 5 Pronunciation – Sound Connections

Phrase:	Sound Connection:	We Should Use:	NEA (Phonetic) Translation:
a) bought the	cc	elision	Bor_ th

*Why?* We remove the t at the end of “bought” to make it easier to say the two consonant sounds together. We should also use a glottal stop to make the transition sound more natural.

b) Recently I	vv	intrusion	Ree sn_ lii yai
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*Why?* When two vowel sounds meet, we need to add a consonant sound – w, y, or r. In this case, the y sound occurs naturally between “Recently” and “I”.

c) who answered	vv	intrusion	hoo Warn sd
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*Why?* As in b), above, we need to add a consonant sound, in this case the w sound occurs naturally between “who” and “answered”.

d) told them	cc	elision	Teul_ thm
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*Why?* We remove the d at the end of “told” to make it easier to say the two consonant sounds together. We should also use a glottal stop to make the transition sound more natural.

**Extensions:** SS look at sound connections between phrases taken from the text, or from the discussion words, above, or any phrases that they can find or invent. In this exercise we focus on two features of connected speech – intrusion and elision – but you could extend the exercise to include any or all of the other features, i.e. glottal stop, linking, assimilation, contraction, and r-linking. SS could write each phrase using the NEA (as above) to show which sounds are used and which are missing or have been added.

## 6 Role Plays

Answers will vary. Why not have a class competition to see which pair or group can come up with the best short drama?

**Extensions:** See Talk a Lot Elementary Handbook for more ideas and guidance on developing role plays. One tip is to start to add more detail to the scene. SS could invent more information about each character, e.g. in the first short text we know that Tom is from Luton and has a partner, but do they have any children? Do they *want* to have children? Are they planning to get married? Have they just moved into their house? Is that why his partner wants him to hurry up and do the decorating? What's her name? Are they happy together? SS work together to add layers of detail which make the role play much richer. Of course, there are no right or wrong answers here: the idea is for SS to use their imaginations and to create something that can be assessed by the teacher in terms of spoken English, pronunciation, use of English, vocabulary, and so on.

## 7 Sentence Blocks – Present Perfect Passive

Note: parts of the text *in italics* will vary. SS should use their own ideas:

The staff Christmas party has been cancelled due to lack of funds.

In this sentence present perfect passive indicates: **recent past**, e.g. in the last 24 hours. The use of passive voice indicates that either we don't know who cancelled it, or that this information is so well-known that it is not worth mentioning it – i.e. the manager, or the board of directors, etc.

**What** has been cancelled due to lack of funds? / The staff Christmas party. / Has the staff Christmas party been cancelled due to lack of funds? / Yes, it has. / Has the *children's carol concert* been cancelled due to lack of funds? / No, it hasn't. The *children's carol concert* hasn't been cancelled due to lack of funds. / So...

**What** has happened? / The staff Christmas party has been cancelled due to lack of funds. / Has the staff Christmas party been cancelled due to lack of funds? / Yes, it has. / Has *the deputy manager dressed up as Santa Claus*? / No, *she* hasn't. *The deputy manager* hasn't dressed up as Santa Claus. / So...

**Why** has the staff Christmas party been cancelled? / Due to lack of funds. / Has the staff Christmas party been cancelled due to lack of funds? / Yes, it has. / Has the staff Christmas party been cancelled due to *lack of interest*? / No, it hasn't. The staff Christmas party hasn't been cancelled due to *lack of interest*. / So...

**Which** party has been cancelled due to lack of funds? / The staff Christmas party. / Has the staff Christmas party been cancelled due to lack of funds? / Yes, it has. / Has the *children's party* been cancelled due to lack of funds? / No, it hasn't. The *children's party* hasn't been cancelled due to lack of funds. / So...

**Extensions:** Use other sentences from the text (or sentences written by SS on the same topic) and practise building sentence blocks using a variety of question words. SS work individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class. Or SS could focus on the verb form in question - present perfect passive - to create more starting sentences and sentence blocks. See Talk a Lot Elementary Handbook for further ideas.

## About Talk a Lot Intermediate Book 2

The aim of any Talk a Lot course is for students to practise and improve their speaking, listening, and pronunciation skills. Along the way the student will learn plenty of new vocabulary – including non-literal English expressions, such as idioms, phrasal verbs, and slang – and also practise reading, writing, and grammar skills, e.g. verb forms, word order, parts of a sentence, and so on.

This two-page spread provides an organised sequence of learning activities for students at intermediate level (CEF B2). We believe that there is easily enough material here for a 90-minute lesson. Of course, how long the material lasts will depend on a variety of factors, such as the level of your students, and how familiar they are with Talk a Lot techniques. If you used some or all of the extension activities, you could make the material last much longer.

Although many of the activities in this book can be used without having previously studied with Talk a Lot material, e.g. the reading comprehension tests, this is the second Talk a Lot Intermediate course book and the author has assumed that students will have some prior knowledge of Talk a Lot methodology, e.g. knowing how to make sentence blocks, and how to find the stressed syllables and sounds in a word or phrase; or how to read the New English Alphabet. If you or your students feel a bit lost with some of this material, you may practise the techniques with any of the previous Talk a Lot course books:

Talk a Lot Elementary Books 1-3  
Talk a Lot Elementary Handbook  
Talk a Lot Foundation Course  
Talk a Lot Intermediate Book 1

All of these books – and much more – may be downloaded for free from <http://purlandtraining.com>

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