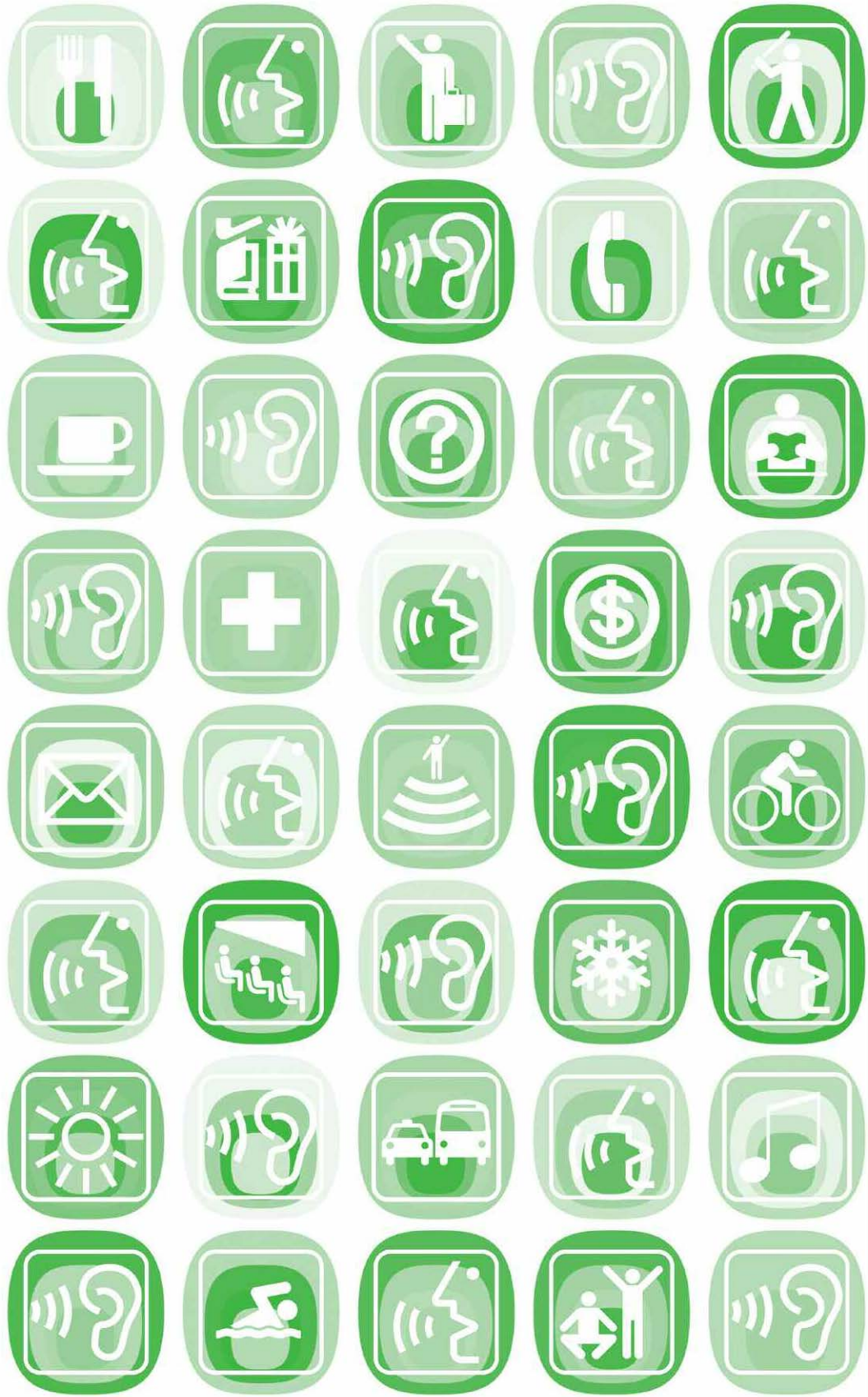


# DIALOGS FOR EVERYDAY USE

Short Situational Dialogs  
for Students of English as a Foreign Language





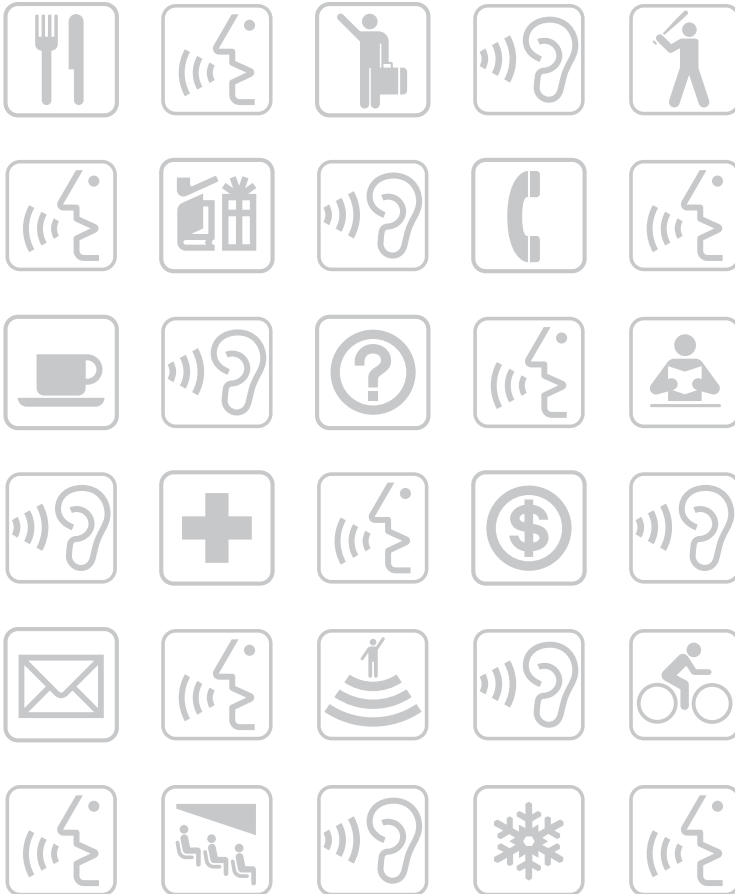
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JULIA M. DOBSON

DEAN CURRY, EDITOR

ANNE COVELL NEWTON, LANGUAGE NOTES



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of English Language Programs

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Julia M. Dobson

Dean Curry, Editor

Language Notes by Anne Covell Newton

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# FOREWORD

The 30 dialogs included in this booklet appeared originally in the *English Teaching Forum* (Vol. 10, May–June 1972, No. 3) and are reprinted with very slight changes.

*Dialogs for Everyday Use* are situation-based, the emphasis being on realism and naturalness to the extent that these are possible within the limitations imposed by a short, self-contained text. The speakers express themselves naturally in the way native American speakers might speak in certain everyday situations. Speech is at normal speed and with “standard” pronunciation and intonation.

The Language Notes provide information on grammar and intonation patterns, give cross-references to similar patterns in other dialogs, and suggest additional examples that can be used for drills on the structure in question.

An audiocassette is available with the booklet and is a necessary component of the audio-study unit.



## DIALOG 1

# Formal Greetings and Farewells

---

Paul: Hello. How are you?

Don: Fine, thank you. How are you?

Paul: Fine, thanks. (*bus sound-effect*) Oh, excuse me—here's my bus. Good-bye.

Don: Good-bye.

---

## Language Notes

- **Hello.** *Good morning* or *good afternoon* might also be used. They are somewhat more formal. **How are you?** Notice the intonation. This *how*-question is one of the few instances in which a form of BE receives the primary sentence stress. (This phenomenon normally occurs in “question word” questions in which the form of BE stands at the end or is followed by a non-demonstrative pronoun: *What IS it? Where IS he? When WAS it? Where will it BE? Where have you BEEN?*) Sometimes, however, speakers stress the *you*, so that the intonation is identical to the “response question” described below.
- **How are you?** Notice that the responding speaker uses a different intonation for this question than the first speaker used. The shift of stress onto *you* points to that word as carrying the new or changed bit of meaning in this question, which is otherwise identical to the question in the first line—for now the *you* refers to a different person than it did in the original question. (Sometimes the responding speaker will answer simply, “Fine, thank you—and you?” omitting all the words of the “understood” question except the one word *you*, which, uttered with a strong stress, carries the new meaning. For an example, see Dialog 2.)
- **Thanks** is slightly less formal than *thank you*. Notice the contraction *here's* (= *here is*).





## DIALOG 2

# Informal Greetings and Farewells

---

Dick: Hi! How are you?

Helen: Fine, thanks—and you?

Dick: Just fine. Where are you going?

Helen: To the library.

Dick: O.K. I'll see you later. So long

Helen: So long.

---

## Language Notes

- **Hi** is an informal equivalent of *hello*. For the intonation of **How are you?** see Dialog 1.
- **Fine, thanks—and you?** See Dialog 1. Notice the rising intonation on *and you?*
- Notice that the normal response to *Where are you going?* is simply **To the library**—not *I'm going to the library*. It is unnatural and unusual to repeat the information already supplied by the question.
- **O.K.** is a less formal equivalent of *all right*. The common saying **I'll see you later** is often shortened to **See you later** (with the *I'll* understood). **So long** is an informal equivalent of *good-bye*.

## DIALOG 3

### Formal Introductions

---

**Margaret:** Mr. Wilson, I'd like you to meet Dr. Edward Smith.

**Mr. Wilson:** How do you do, Dr. Smith.

**Dr. Smith:** How do you do.

**Margaret:** Dr. Smith is an economist. He's just finished writing a book on international trade.

**Mr. Wilson:** Oh? That's my field, too. I work for the United Nations.

**Dr. Smith:** In the Development Program, by any chance?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yes. How did you guess?

**Dr. Smith:** I've read your articles on technical assistance. They're excellent.

---

### Language Notes

- Notice the rising intonation on the words **Mr. Wilson**. A falling intonation on a name used in direct address is unusual in American English and tends to sound brusque and impolite. Listen for the **d** in **I'd**. It is important to include the **d** in this expression in order to differentiate it from *I like*, which has a different meaning. (*I'd like = I would like = I want.*)
- **How do you do** has the form of a question (and is sometimes followed by a question mark), but it is not a question in meaning. It is simply a polite formula used in formal introductions.
- The response to **How do you do** is simply the same phrase uttered with the same intonation by the other speaker. In fact, lines 2 and 3 are not strictly statement and response but rather statements uttered by the two speakers independently and, possibly, simultaneously.
- **He's just finished writing...** A useful pattern indicating an action recently completed. (*Just* is frequently used with the present perfect tense.) You may find it helpful to conduct a drill on this pattern in conjunction with the teaching of the present perfect, using variations of this sentence, such as *I've just finished reading...*, *I've just finished cleaning...*, *She's just finished correcting...*



*They've just finished putting...*, The same pattern, with *start* or *begin*, is commonly used for an action recently initiated: *He's just started writing...*, *I've just started reading...*, *She's just started correcting...*, etc. A somewhat simpler form of this pattern (*just* + present perfect), to indicate an action recently completed, is of even broader usefulness: *He's just written...*, *I've just read...*, *We've just eaten...*, *I've just heard...*, *They've just returned...*, etc.

- **Development program.** Since these two words constitute a compound noun, the principal stress falls on the first word.
- **I've read...** Listen for the /v/ in *I've*. It is important to include the /v/ in this expression in order to differentiate it from *I read*, which has a different meaning.
- **By any chance?** = *possibly*. Used in questions to confirm something you think might be true actually is.



## DIALOG 4

### Informal Introductions

---

(*Sound of background conversation*)

**Jim:** Who's the tall girl next to Barbara?

**Charles:** That's Mary Anderson. Didn't you meet her at Steve's party?

**Jim:** No, I wasn't at Steve's party.

**Charles:** Oh! Then let me introduce you to her now. Mary, this is my cousin Jim.

**Mary:** Hi, Jim. I'm glad to meet you.

**Jim:** I'm glad to meet you. Can't we sit down somewhere and talk?

**Mary:** Sure, let's sit over there.

---

### Language Notes

- **Who's** is the contracted form of *who is*. It should not be confused with the possessive *whose*, which, although pronounced the same (/huwz/), has a different meaning.
- **Didn't you meet her...?** Notice the use of the negative question. While generally used to indicate the expectation of an affirmative answer, here it expresses surprise that the answer to the question will probably—and unexpectedly—be negative.

Notice that in this sentence, the strongest stress, and the high point of the intonation, falls on **at**—although prepositions normally receive weak stress. It is as if **at**, in this case, were equivalent to *present* or *there*, as in *I wasn't present* or *I wasn't there*—in which the adjective and adverb, respectively, would normally receive the strongest sentence stress.

- **Mary, this is my cousin Jim.** Notice that the introducer mentions the girl's name first, and introduces the young man to her (not vice versa). This is the normal, courteous manner of introduction among speakers of American English. Notice the rising intonation on **Mary**, a name used in direct address. See note in Dialog 3.
- **Hi.** See note in Dialog 2.

- **I'm glad to meet you.** Notice that the second speaker says this sentence with a different intonation than the first speaker used. The second speaker emphasizes *you*. (Compare 1b. *How are you?*) **Can't we sit down...?** = *Would you like to sit down...?*
- **Sure** is often used in informal conversation as a strong affirmative response equivalent to *yes*, *certainly*, *of course*, etc.



## DIALOG 5

### Time

---

Margaret: What time is it?

Toni: It's a quarter to five.

Margaret: Aren't we supposed to be at Jim's house by five o'clock?

Toni: Five or five-thirty. He said it didn't make any difference.

Margaret: Then maybe we could pick your suit up at the cleaners.

Toni: Sure, we have plenty of time.

---

### Language Notes

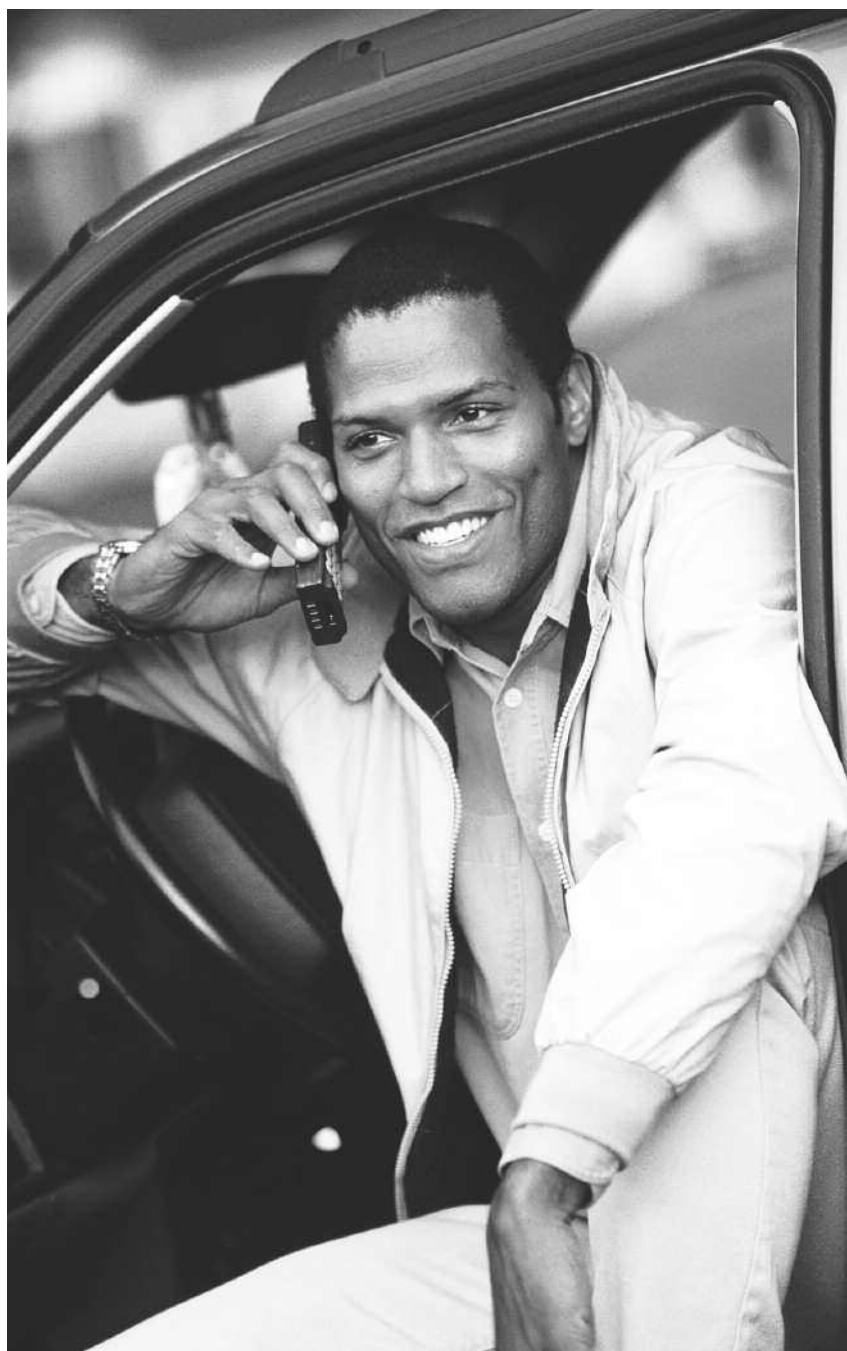
- **It's a quarter to five.** This is probably the most common way of stating this time. Other possibilities are *It's a quarter of five* or *It's fifteen till five*. (*It's four forty-five* is rarely heard in casual conversation.) Fifteen minutes after the hour would usually be expressed thus: *It's a quarter after five* or *It's a quarter past five*. We also hear *It's five-fifteen* (though this is less frequent in casual conversation). An alternative form for *five-thirty* is *half-past five*. For times other than the quarter-hours or half-hour, numbers are used: *twenty past five* or *twenty after five*, *ten to five* or *ten till five*, etc. Frequently the speaker will omit the *It's* or *It's a* and answer simply *A quarter to five* or *Quarter to five*. Some speakers omit or obscure the *a*: *It's (a) quarter to five*.
- **Aren't we supposed to be...?** Notice that the negative question here indicates, as it usually does, the speaker's belief that his assumption is true. He expects an affirmative response, a confirmation of his assumption. **Supposed to** = *expected to; obliged to* (not as strong as *required to*). This meaning of suppose occurs only in the passive. Other examples: *I'm supposed to prepare a program for our English Club meeting next week. They were supposed to be here an hour ago—I don't know where they can be. We're supposed to practice the dialogues at home, too. Children are supposed to obey their parents.* Notice the difference in intonation between the yes-no question in line c (rising intonation) and the *wh*-question in line a (falling intonation). **By five o'clock** = *no later than five o'clock*.







- **He said it didn't...** In conversation the conjunction *that* (*He said that it didn't...*) is generally omitted in reported speech, as here. Notice the sequence of tenses: *said... didn't*. Where the verb in direct speech would be in the present tense ("Shall we come at five or five-thirty?" "Either one. It *doesn't* make any difference."), it is past tense (*didn't*) after a past tense introductory verb (*said*): *He said it didn't make any difference.*



## DIALOG 6

### A Telephone Call

---

(Phone rings)

Barbara: Hello.

Fred: Hello. May I speak to Alice Weaver, please?

Barbara: Just a minute... Alice, it's for you.

Alice: Hello.

Fred: Hi, Alice. This is Fred. Would you like to go to a movie tonight?

Alice: Thanks, I'd love to. I haven't been to a movie for a long time.

Fred: Good. I'll pick you up around seven-thirty, then. The movie starts at eight.

Alice: Fine, I'll be ready.

(Phone clicks down)

---

### Language Notes

- A simple **Hello** is the usual way of answering the telephone. Business firms, however, frequently identify themselves when answering the telephone: *Jones Construction Company*, or *Good morning, Jones Construction Company*, or, possibly, *Jones Construction Company, Mr. Smith speaking*.
- **May I speak to Alice Weaver, please?** A possible alternative is *I'd like to speak to Alice Weaver*. Or the person calling may identify himself: *Hello. This is Fred Young. May I speak to Alice Weaver, please?*
- **Would you like to...?** This is a polite form of *do you want to...?* It should be carefully differentiated from *do you like to...?* which has quite a different meaning.
- **I'd love to = I would love to**, a somewhat more enthusiastic response than *I'd like to*. (All of these are polite equivalents of *I want to*.) Care should be taken to include 'd in these expressions in both speech and writing, to differentiate them from *I love*

*to* and *I like to*, which differ from them in meaning as well as in form. **I haven't been to...** = *I haven't gone to....* Other examples: *I haven't been to England yet, but I hope to go there soon. Have you been out today? We've been to the theater three times this week. We hadn't been there at all until last weekend.* This use of BE is rather strictly colloquial and is generally limited to the perfect tenses.

- **I'll pick you up...** = *I'll come to your house so that we can go together.* *Pick up* is a separable two-word verb. **Around seven-thirty** = *about seven thirty*—perhaps a few minutes before or after 7:30. To indicate a more precise time, the speaker would say “at seven-thirty.” To emphasize punctuality or the exactness of the appointed time, a speaker might say “at seven-thirty sharp,” “at eight o'clock sharp,” etc. (Notice that *o'clock* is often omitted in these expressions.)

Although this dialogue ends with the line *Fine, I'll be ready*, a telephone conversation usually ends with each speaker saying *good-bye*. When your students perform this dialogue, it would probably be useful, therefore, to have each of them say *good-bye* at the end of the conversation.

# Happiness

---

Linda: You look happy today!

Frank: I am happy. I just heard I passed my physics exam.

Linda: Congratulations! I'm glad somebody's happy.

Frank: Why? What's the matter?

Linda: Oh, I'm just worried, I guess I have to take a history exam next week.

---

## Language Notes

- Notice the intonation of **I am happy**. This intonation, with the strongest stress on **am**, is the emphatic, confirmatory form normally used in response position (as here). It is similar, in meaning and intonation, to the short answer form, I am—which might, in fact, be used here, with the weak-stressed **happy** simply dropping off. **I just heard I passed...** Notice that the *that* is omitted in this bit of reported speech. **Exam** = *examination*. **Physics exam**, a compound noun, has the principal stress on the first word.
- **I'm glad somebody's happy**. Note the omission of *that* in reported speech, and the strong contrastive stress on **SOMEbody** (implying that the speaker herself is *not* happy).
- **What's the matter?** A common idiom meaning *What is troubling you? What is wrong?*
- **I'm just worried**. Here *just* means *merely, only*. In line b (*I just heard ...*) it is used in its meaning of *very recently*. **Have to** = *must*. Notice the /f/ in the pronunciation of this idiom: /haefte/. **History exam**. See note on *physics exam* above.
- **I guess** = *I think (that)*.



## DIALOG 8

### Ordering A Meal

---

(*Restaurant sounds*)

**Waiter:** Are you ready to order now, sir?

**Ralph:** Yes. I'll have tomato soup, roast beef, mashed potatoes, and peas.

**Waiter:** That's tomato soup...roast beef...mashed potatoes...and peas.  
How do you want the beef—rare, medium, or well-done?

**Ralph:** Well-done, please.

**Waiter:** Anything to drink?

**Ralph:** Hmm... just water. I'll have coffee with my dessert.

---

### Language Notes

- **I'll have tomato soup, roast beef, mashed potatoes, and peas.** Notice how the intonation rises on the last syllable of each item in the series. Notice, too, that the verb in this idiom is *have*, not *take or eat*.
- The waiter pauses briefly as he writes each item in his order book. **Rare, medium, or well-done?** Notice the slightly rising intonation on the first two items of the series. Rare = *slightly cooked*. **Well-done, please.** Notice that the subject and verb are omitted in the response; only the necessary information is given.
- **Anything to drink?** Notice that the subject and verb are omitted. The question is “understood” to mean something like *Do you want anything to drink? Would you like anything to drink? Will you have anything to drink?*
- **Hmmm** is a pause sound, used while the speaker is thinking of what he wants to say. **Just water.** Again, the response omits the subject and verb—in fact, all the words except those needed to supply the necessary (new) information. The rest are supplied by the context. A full-sentence equivalent would be something like *I'll just have water to drink.* (American restaurants customarily serve water with the meal, without request.) **I'll have coffee...** Notice that the verb in this idiom is *have* (not *take* or *drink*): *I'll have coffee (tea, milk, a coke, etc.).*





## DIALOG 9

# Birthdays

---

Patty: How old are you?

Susan: Nine ... but I'll be ten on May sixteenth.

Patty: I'm older than you! I'll be ten on May fourteenth.

Susan: Are you going to have a birthday party?

Patty: Maybe. I'll have to ask my mother.

---

## Language Notes

- **Nine.** A short form equivalent to *I'm nine years old*. **Sixteenth.** Notice that the strongest stress in this word is on the second syllable. (The stress pattern, as well as the final /n/, differentiates *sixTEEN* from *SIXty*.) Some speakers insert *the* between the month and the numeral: *May the sixteenth*, *May the fourteenth*.
- **I'll be ten on May fourteenth.** Notice the contrastive stress on the first syllable of *FOURteenth*. Normally, the stronger stress falls on the second syllable of this word: *fourTEENTH* (like *sixTEENTH* in the line above). However, to bring out the contrast, the speaker emphasizes the contrasting element, *four-*.
- **Going to.** The rhythm pattern of English requires that this weak-stressed, potentially three-syllable, element be reduced in length. In the process of reduction some of the consonants are lost or modified and the vowels changed to more centralized, lax forms. **Birthday party.** Notice that the normal stress for a compound noun falls on the first element of the compound.
- **Maybe.** Notice that the intonation falls only slightly—indicating doubt, indecision, or lack of completion. **Have to.** See Dialog 7.



## DIALOG 10

### A Crowded Theater

---

(Theater murmur)

**Bob:** Excuse me, is this seat taken?

**Larry:** No, it isn't.

**Bob:** Would you mind moving over one, so my friend and I can sit together?

**Larry:** No, not at all.

**Bob:** Thanks a lot.

---

### Language Notes

- **Would you mind moving over one...?** *Would you mind* is a polite request form meaning *Are you willing to*. Literally, it is roughly equivalent to *Do you object to* or *Do you dislike*. Therefore, to indicate that he is willing to comply with the request, the person answering will use a negative form, such as **No, not at all** or **No, of course not**. By this he means **No, I don't mind = I will be glad to**. **Moving.** Notice that the verb following *Would you mind...* is in the *-ing* form. Other examples: *Would you mind opening a window?* *Would you mind waiting a few minutes?* *Would you mind speaking a little more slowly?* **So = so that = in order that.**
- **No, not at all = No, I wouldn't mind at all** or **No, of course not.**

## DIALOG 11

### Mistakes

---

**Bruce:** Where did John go?

**Laura:** He went to the drugstore. (*Pause*)

**Bruce:** To the bookstore?

**Laura:** No, I said he went to the drugstore.

**Bruce:** Oh, I misunderstood you. I thought you said bookstore.

**Laura:** How could you make a mistake like that? Weren't you paying attention?

---

### Language Notes

- **Drugstore.** Since this is a compound noun, the principal stress is on the first syllable.
- **To the bookstore?** This is a normally shortened form for *Did you say he went to the bookstore?*—with the omitted words “understood.” **Bookstore.** This word, a compound noun, has the principal stress on the first syllable.
- **Drugstore.** Notice the heavy stress and slightly higher than usual intonation on *drug-*, to emphasize this syllable, as contrasted with *book-* in the line above.
- Notice the difference in intonation between the *how-* question and the *yes-no* question.

## DIALOG 12

### Games

---

**George:** Say, Joe, do you play bridge?

**Joe:** No, I don't play any card games. But I know how to play chess. How about you, George?

**George:** Well, I happen to be one of the best chess players around.

**Joe:** O.K. Let's play, then. We'll see who's the best

---

### Language Notes

- **Say.** An interjection, used very informally as an attention getter.
- **I don't play any card games.** Notice the strong stress on *card*. It is normal for this word to be stressed, as it is the first element of the compound noun *CARD games*. The unusually strong stress here implies that, although the speaker doesn't play card games, he does play *other* kinds of games (as, for instance, chess). **I know how to play chess.** The idiom *know how to*, meaning to be capable of, to have the skill to do something, is widely used. For example: *Do you know how to swim? He knows how to drive a car. I don't know how to write. How about you, George?* in this case means *Do you play chess, George?*
- **One of the best chess players around** = one of the best chess players in this vicinity. **Chess players** is a compound noun, and therefore has the principal stress on *chess*.



## DIALOG 13

### Health

---

Jane: I hear you've been ill.

Cathy: Well, I had the flu for a couple of weeks, but I'm fine now.

Jane: You're looking well. By the way, did you hear about Mrs. Jackson?

Cathy: No, What about her?

Jane: She had such a bad case of the flu that they had to take her to the hospital.

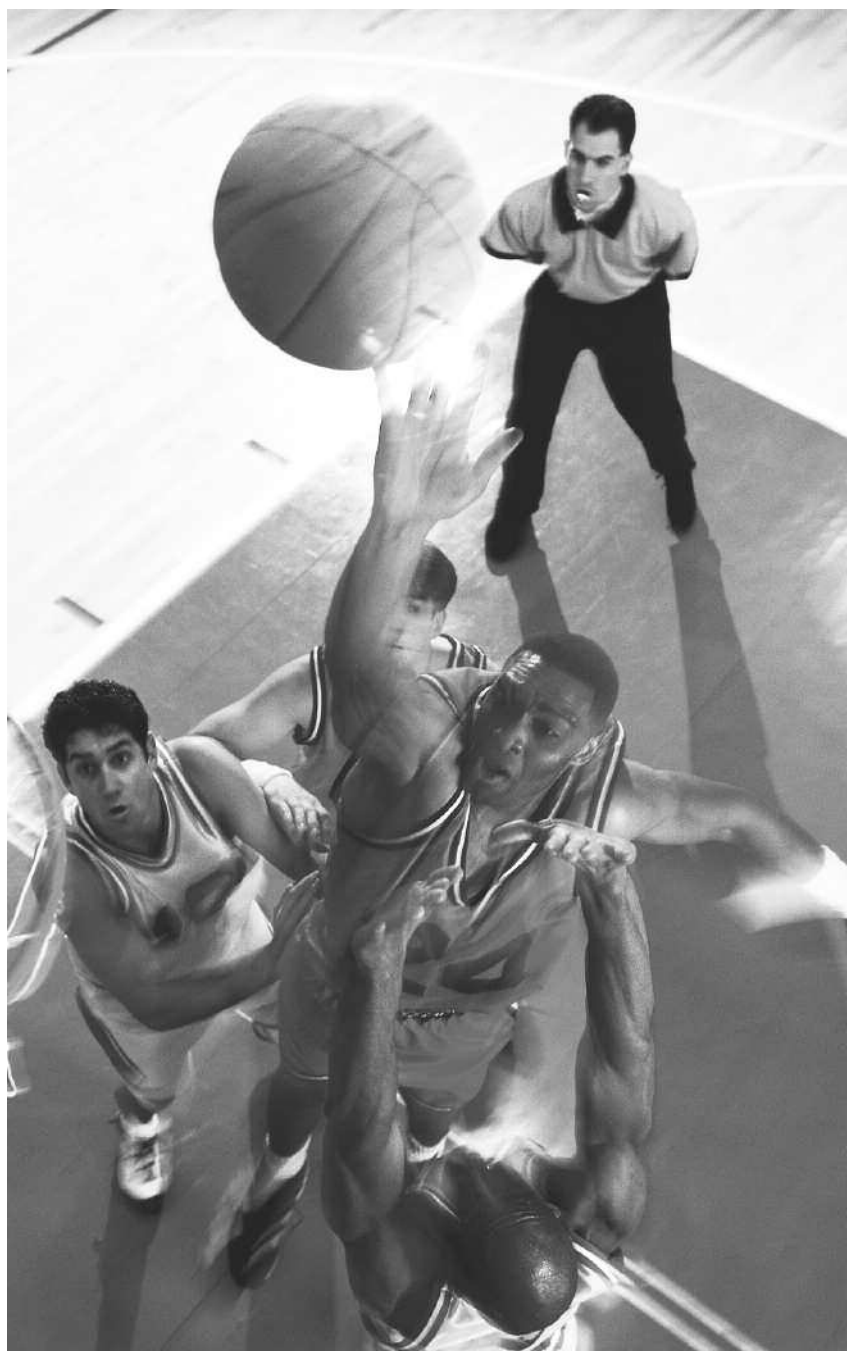
Cathy: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that!

---

### Language Notes

- **I hear you've been ill.** Notice the omission of *that*, as is usual in reported speech in casual conversation.
- **Well.** An interjection, used here simply as an introductory word.
- **You're looking well.** Here *well* is an adjective meaning *healthy*. *Are looking* is, in this sentence, a linking verb. **By the way** = *incidentally*.
- **Such a...that...** is a typical "result" sentence. **They had to take her...** This is the "general" *they*. This clause is equivalent in meaning to the passive *She had to be taken*.





## DIALOG 14

### Sports

---

**Phil:** Say, what's your favorite sport?

**Jack:** Hmm... it's hard to say. I like golf a lot—but I guess I like tennis better.

**Phil:** Do you play much tennis?

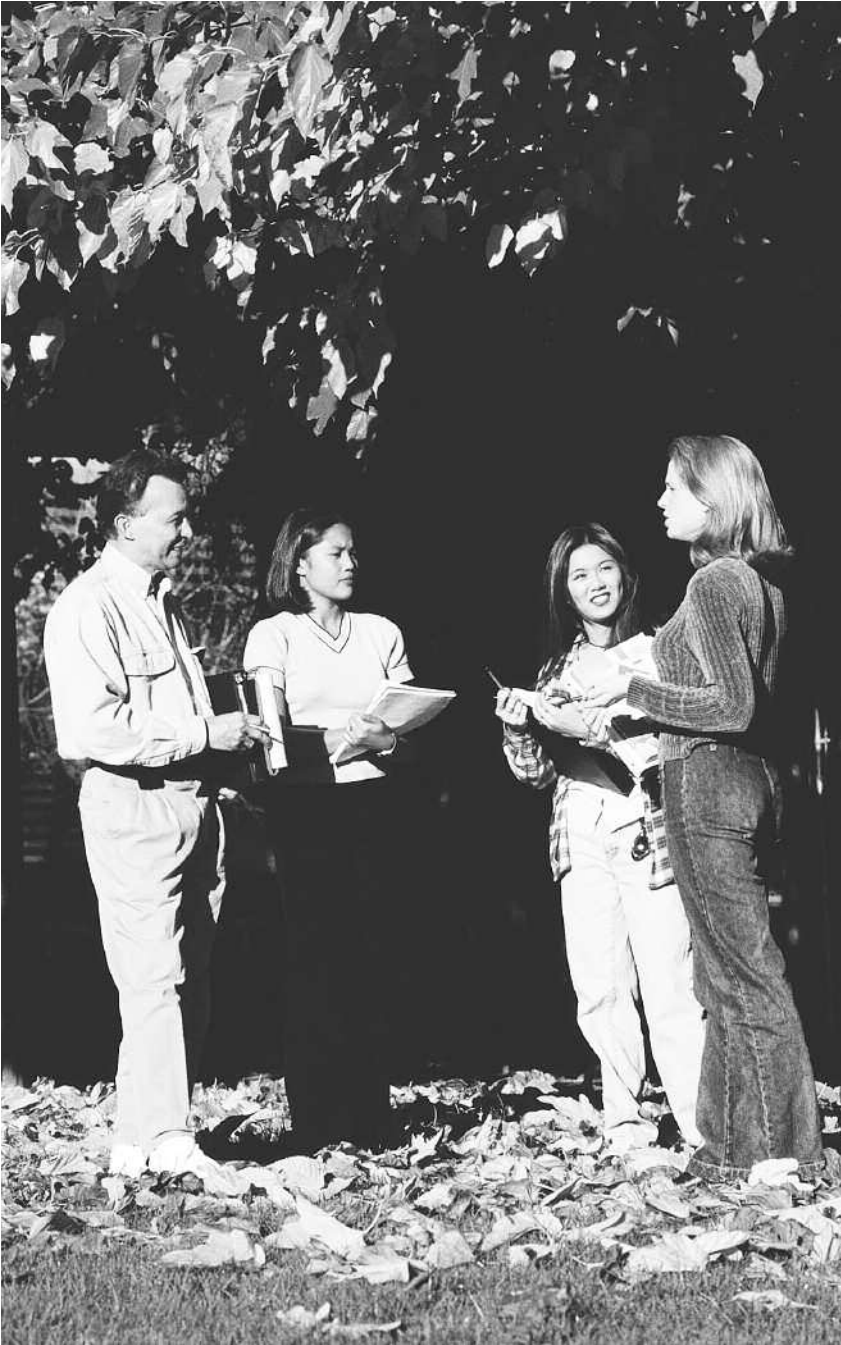
**Jack:** Yes, quite a bit. How about a game sometime?

**Phil:** Sorry. I'm strictly a spectator—football, baseball, basketball, golf...I watch them all.

---

### Language Notes

- **Say.** An interjection. See note, Dialog 12.
- **Hmmm** is a pause sound, indicating that the speaker is thinking about what he is going to say. **It's hard to say** = *that's a difficult decision to make; it's difficult to make a clear-cut choice.* **I guess** = *I think (that).*
- **Quite a bit** = a lot, rather much. **How about a game sometime?** = *Would you like to play sometime?*
- **Sorry.** This is a short way of saying something like *No, I'm sorry, but I don't play tennis.* **Football, baseball, basketball, golf.** Notice the series intonation, with the rising tone recurring on each item of the series.



## DIALOG 15

### Asking Directions

---

*Street noises*

**Marilyn:** Excuse Me. Could you tell me which way Dobson's bookstore is?

**Nancy:** Yes, it's that way. You go two blocks, then turn left. It's on the corner opposite the post office.

**Marilyn:** Thanks I've only been in town a few days, so I really don't know my way around yet.

**Nancy:** Oh, I know how you feel. We moved here a year ago, and I still don't know where everything is.

---

### Language Notes

- **Could you tell me...?** An alternative (and slightly softer) version of *Can you tell me...?* **Which way Dobson's bookstore is.** Notice that in the "indirect question" the subject precedes the verb—the reverse of the word order in the direct question (**Which way is Dobson's bookstore?**).
- **Post office.** A compound noun, with the principal stress on the first word.
- **I...don't know my way around = I don't know how to find things or I don't know how to go to various places.**
- **I know how you feel.** Notice how the "indirect question" (*how you feel*) differs from the direct question (*How do you feel?*): it has the word order of a statement rather than of a question—the subject wholly precedes the verb, and the interrogative *do* is omitted. **I don't know where everything is.** Again, an "indirect question" (*where everything is*) has the word order of a statement, with subject preceding the verb, rather than of the corresponding direct question (*Where is everything?*).



## DIALOG 16

### Coincidences

---

**Allen:** Haven't I seen you somewhere before?

**Julia:** No, I don't think so.

**Allen:** But your face is so familiar. Wait a second...I know...  
We were on the same flight to New York last month.

**Julia:** Oh, yes. Now I remember. What a coincidence to meet  
in San Francisco!

**Allen:** Well, you know what they say—it's a small world.

---

### Language Notes

- **Haven't I seen you somewhere before?** The negative question is equivalent to *I've seen you somewhere before, haven't I?* and expresses the expectation that the speaker's supposition is true.
- **What a...!** An exclamation denoting a great degree of surprise, joy, disappointment, etc. Some other examples of its use: *What a surprise to see you here! What a joy to have you with us! What a misfortune! What a shame that you have to leave so soon! What a pity she couldn't come! What a wonderful idea that is!*
- **You know what they say** = *You know the saying...* Notice the word order of the "indirect question" *what they say*. This is an instance of the "general" *they*. **It's a small world** is a common saying, or cliché, among native speakers of English.



## DIALOG 17

### Safety

---

(*Street noises*)

**Peter:** There's the shoe store we've been looking for. It's just across the street.

**Gail:** Wait! You can't cross the street in the middle of the block! You have to cross at the corner.

**Peter:** Oh, come on. Let's go across here.

(*Sound of car screeching*)

**Gail:** Look out! You nearly got hit by that car! Now do you see why you should cross at the corner?

**Peter:** I guess you're right. I'll be more careful after this.

---

### Language Notes

- **There's the...** This is the "pointing out" *there* (the adverb, not the introductory function word), and therefore it receives a strong stress. **Shoe store.** A compound noun; therefore the first word is singular and receives the principal stress. **The shoe store we've been looking for.** This is the usual, natural way to say this, omitting the relative pronoun and putting the preposition at the end. *The shoe store that we've been looking for* is also possible. However, *for which we've been looking* is extremely unlikely in this natural conversational context. Notice how the present perfect progressive emphasizes the immediate, continuous nature of the activity. **Just across the street** = directly across the street, exactly across the street.
- **Have to** /hæftə/.
- **Oh, come on,** as used here, means something like *Oh, don't be so careful and scrupulous!* The phrase *come on* is frequently used to mean *Hurry along. Don't delay!* Notice that the two-word verb *come ON* has the stronger stress on the adverbial element *on*.
- **Look out!** = *Be careful! Be alert!* The phrase *Watch out* means the same thing. **See** = *understand*. **Why you should cross.** Notice that the indirect question has the normal word order of a statement,



with the subject before the verb. (In the corresponding direct question the word order would be: *Why should you cross...?*)

- **I guess** = *I think (that)*.

## DIALOG 18

### Musical Instruments

---

(*Sound of piano playing*)

**Anne:** Listen! Somebody's playing the piano.

**Betty:** Yeah, it sounds nice, doesn't it? I wish I could play a musical instrument.

**Anne:** Don't you play the violin?

**Betty:** No, but my sister does. Actually, she's pretty good at it.

**Anne:** I took flute lessons for a couple of years, but I never learned to play very well. I guess I don't have any musical talent.

**Betty:** Oh, that's not true. You sing very well. I can't even do that!

---

### Language Notes

- **Yeah.** An informal variant of **yes**. **Doesn't it?** The falling intonation on this question tag shows that it is simply a conversational element not requiring an answer. **I wish I could...** Notice that *could* is a past tense form, as required after *wish*.
- **Don't you play...?** The negative question implies that the speaker expects the answer to be affirmative. It is equivalent to *You play the violin, don't you?* with a rising intonation on the final *you*.
- **My sister does.** *Does* is a pro-verb, standing in place of the verb. The sentence means *My sister plays the violin*.
- **Flute lessons.** A compound noun, with the principal stress on the first word.

## DIALOG 19

# Taking A Vacation

---

**David:** Did you say you're going to take a vacation next month?

**Ruth:** Yes, my family and I are going to New York for a week. We want to visit the museums and see some plays.

**David:** I envy you. I haven't had a vacation for a long time. I wish I could get away for a while.

**Ruth:** You can take a vacation sometime soon, can't you?

**David:** No, there's too much work to do. Maybe next year, though.

---

## Language Notes

- **Did you say you're going to...?** This could also be past tense: *Did you say you were going to...?* However, the present form (*you're*) seems more natural.
- **My family and I are going to New York.** Notice that this *going to* is the verb *go* followed by the preposition *to*. The *going to* in the line above is the future marker, which is normally said with weak stress, as here.
- **I wish I could...** Note the required past tense (*could*) after wish.
- **Can't you?** The rising intonation indicates that this is a veritable question, requiring an answer.
- **There's too much work to do.** Other examples of this pattern: *There's too much equipment to carry. There are too many papers to correct. There are too many people to see. There's not enough food to eat. There isn't enough work to do. There aren't enough courses to take.*

## DIALOG 20

### Recipes

---

**Shirley:** Would you like some cookies? I just made them.

**Louise:** Thank you. Yes, I would.

**Shirley:** These are chocolate, and those are almond-flavored.

**Louise:** I guess I'll try a chocolate one first. Mmmm...this is delicious. Are they hard to make?

**Shirley:** No, they're really quite easy. Wait a minute, I've got the recipe right here. See...these are the ingredients, and then you just follow the directions.

**Louise:** That does look easy. I think I'll make some tonight.

---

### Language Notes

- **Would you like some cookies?** is equivalent to *Would you like to have some (of these) cookies?* It is a more courteous form than *Do you want some cookies?* **Just** = *very recently*.
- **A chocolate one.** Notice that the stress falls on *chocolate*, since *one*, when used as a pronoun, is normally unstressed. **Mmmm** is a sound denoting gustatory enjoyment. **Are they hard to make?** A useful pattern. Some additional examples: *Is that hard to do? Are these books difficult to read? Is that paper hard to write on? My new car is easy to drive. These shirts are easy to wash and iron.*
- **I've got the recipe...** Alternative form: *I have the recipe...* **Just** = *simply; only*.
- **That does look easy.** The emphatic form of *That looks easy*. Notice the strong stress on *does*.



## DIALOG 21

### Weather

---

(Wind noises)

Karen: Brrrr! I'm cold. I thought it was supposed to get warmer today.

Ed: Yeah, I thought so, too. That's what the weatherman said.

Karen: It must be the wind that makes it so cold. I'm freezing!

Ed: Me, too. Let's go inside.

Karen: O.K. It's no fun standing out here, even if the sun is shining.

---

### Language Notes

- **Brrrr!** is a sound made to indicate that the speaker feels very cold. It is sometimes pronounced with a trilled *r* or a bilabial trill. **Was supposed to** = *was expected to*. The meaning of *supposed to* here is slightly different than in 5, since here it carries no sense of obligation. Notice that *was supposed to* is past tense after *thought*. **To get warmer** = *to become warmer* (but *become* would rarely be used in this context in casual conversation).
- **Yeah** is a very informal form of **yes**. **That's what the weatherman said**. A useful pattern. Some other examples: *That's what the teacher told us*. *That's what Mr. Johnson said*. *That's what my father always says*. *That's what the students say*. **Weatherman**. Notice that this word has a primary stress on the first syllable and a tertiary stress on the third syllable: /wæðermæn/. Some other words ending in *-man* that have a tertiary stress on the final syllable are *máilmàn*, *mílmàn*, *súpermàn snówman*. Some words with the suffix *-man*, however, have an unstressed final syllable (with a consequent obscuring of the vowel sound). Among these are *fireman*, *géntleman*, *póstman*, *sálesman*, *Énglishman*. Note that *póstman* and *mailman* are identical in meaning but differ in stress pattern.

- **It must be the wind...** This is the *must* of probability or supposition. Other examples of this usage: *It must be going to rain—it's so dark outside. They must not be home yet—they didn't answer the telephone. That tree must be thirty feet tall—it's higher than the roof of the house.* Notice that the two *its* in this sentence have no direct reference or antecedent. The first one is a function word in the idiomatic structure *It must be...*, while the second refers only vaguely to the weather.

# Having Things Done

---

**Steve:** Excuse me. I wonder if you can help me.

**Mike:** Sure. What is it?

**Steve:** I want to have my hair cut, but I can't find a barber shop.

**Mike:** I know where one is. Come on—I'll show you.

---

## Language Notes

- **I wonder if...** A polite introduction to a request for assistance. Some other examples: *I wonder if you could show us how to get there. I wonder if you would mind moving over one, so my friend and I can sit together. I wonder if you can tell me where I can find a barber shop.*
- **Sure.** See 4. **What is it?** = *What is it you would like me to do?* Notice the stress on *is*.
- **Have my hair cut** = *have someone cut my hair*. Other examples of the causative *have*: *I had my shoes shined just before I came. We're going to have our house painted next year. You should have that window repaired before the rainy season begins.* **Barber shop.** A compound noun, with the principal stress on the first word.
- **I know where one is.** Notice the word order of the indirect question: the subject precedes the verb. Notice that the pronoun *one* is weakly stressed, and the stronger stress is on *is*. See 20.



# Mailing Letters

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**Dean:** Do you mind if we stop by the post office? I have to mail these letters and I don't have any stamps.

**Carol:** Oh, I have some. We don't need to go all the way to the post office.

**Dean:** That would save time. Can you let me have two airmail stamps and one regular one?

**Carol:** Here you are. Are you sure that's enough?

**Dean:** Yes, that's fine. Now all we have to do is find a mailbox.

---

## Language Notes

- **Do you mind...?** = *Is it all right with you...?* or *Do you have any objection...?* This phrase is similar to, but somewhat more direct than, *Would you mind...?* (see 10). It is followed by an *if*-clause to provide for the change of subject from *you* to *we*: *Do you mind if we stop...?* However, if the speaker wishes simply to request the hearer to stop by the post office (in which case there is no "we" involved, hence no change of subject), he will use an *-ing* form complement: *Do you mind stopping by the post office?* Some additional examples of the "if" type: *Do you mind if Mary and Fred come with us?* *Do you mind if we talk about that later, when we have more time?* *Do you mind very much if I don't come to see you today?* Some examples of the "-ing" type: *Do you mind asking Mary and Fred to come with us?* *Do you mind discussing that later, when we have more time?* *Do you mind very much postponing our visit until tomorrow?* **Post office.** A compound noun, with the principal stress on the first word. **Have to** /hæftə/.

**That would save time.** The strong stress on *would* and the fact that the intonation falls only partially at the end indicate a thoughtful, hesitant attitude. **Can you let me have... = Can you give me...** **Two airmail stamps and one regular one.** Notice the contrastive stress on *airmail* and *regular* and on *two* and *one*. Notice also the weak stress on *stamps* and on the corresponding pronoun *one*.



- **Mailbox** is a compound noun, with the stress on the first part. **All we have to do is...** = *The only thing that we must do is...*, *The one thing that remains to be done is...* Some other examples: *I've finished writing the story; now all I have to do is think of a title. He's finished all his courses; now all he has to do is pass the examination. We've got the decorations all ready for the party; now all we have to do is prepare the food.*

# Animals

---

**Connie:** That's a beautiful cat. I wonder who it belongs to.

**Gary:** It belongs to the Browns. They live across the street from us. They have three cats, two dogs, and a canary.

**Connie:** They certainly must like pets! But how do all those animals get along with each other?

**Gary:** Don't ask me. Ask the Browns!

---

## Language Notes

- **Who it belongs to.** Notice the word order of this indirect question. The preposition naturally falls at the end. (*I wonder whom it belongs to* and *I wonder to whom it belongs* are also “grammatically correct” but sound awkward and inappropriate in this context.)
- **Three cats, two dogs, and a canary.** Notice the rising intonation on the first two elements of the series.
- **They certainly must like pets.** This is the *must* of supposition or logical inference (see 21). **Get along with each other** = *live harmoniously and compatibly*.



## DIALOG 25

### Shopping

---

Saleslady: Can I help you?

Gloria: Yes, I'm looking for a pair of white gloves. I think I wear size six.

Saleslady: The white gloves are on this counter. Let's see... here's a size six. These are very nice, and they're washable, too.

Gloria: Oh, I'll try them on. Hmm... they seem to fit. How much are they?

Saleslady: Five dollars.

Gloria: All right. I'll take them.

Saleslady: That'll be five-twenty with the tax.

---

### Language Notes

- **Can I help you?** or **May I help you?** is the way a sales clerk normally approaches a customer with an offer of assistance.
- **Size six.** Women's gloves are usually available in quartersizes (6, 6 1/4, 6 1/2, 6 3/4, etc.). Most women wear a size between 6 and 8.
- **The white gloves are on this counter.** Notice the emphatic stress on *white* and *this*, which the saleslady is contrasting mentally with *other-colored* gloves on *other* counters. **Let's see...** An expression used when a person wants to think something over, to ponder, to make a choice or decision, or to look for something.
- **I'll try them on.** **Try on** is a separable two-word verb meaning to test the fit or appearance of a garment by putting it on. **See 5.** **How much are they?** = **How much do they cost?** Notice that the primary sentence stress falls on **are** in this question (**see 1**).
- **Five-twenty** = five dollars and twenty cents (\$5.20).



# Transportation

---

*(Street noise)*

**Joyce:** Shall we take a taxi or a bus to the meeting?

**Bill:** We'd better take a bus. It's almost impossible to find a taxi during rush hour.

**Joyce:** Isn't that a bus stop over there?

**Bill:** Yes... Oh, oh! There's a bus now. We'll have to run to catch it.

**Joyce:** O.K.... Oh, no! We just missed it.

**Bill:** Never mind. There'll be another one in ten minutes.

---

## Language Notes

- **Shall we...?** = *Do you think we should...?* (*Will* is never used for this meaning.) **Take a taxi or a bus...?** Notice the rising intonation on *taxi* and falling intonation on *bus* in this "or" sentence.
- **We'd better...** = *We ought to...; It would be wise to....* **Rush hour** = the time of day when most people are going to or from work and therefore the traffic is heaviest. In most American cities, rush hour is from seven-thirty to nine in the morning and from about five to six-thirty in the evening. Notice that *Rush hour* is a compound noun, with the principal stress on the first word.
- **Isn't that...?** The negative question expresses an expectation of an affirmative answer. **Bus stop** is a compound noun, with the principal stress on the first word.
- **Oh, oh!** An exclamation expressing alarm or sudden caution. Notice the high-to-low intonation.
- **Oh, no!** An exclamation expressing sudden disappointment, shock, or discouragement. Notice the emphatic stress and intonation. **We just missed it** = *We arrived a moment too late to catch the bus.*
- **Never mind** = *It doesn't matter; don't concern yourself.*



# Comparing

---

**Jean:** I think this material is much prettier than that, don't you?

**Lois:** Well, I don't know. I like them both. Why do you like that one better?

**Jean:** Well, the design is more interesting and the colors are brighter. And it's not as expensive, either.

**Lois:** Oh, I see what you mean. And besides, these colors are more becoming to you.

**Jean:** Do you really think so? I'll buy it, then.

---

## Language Notes

- **I think this material...** Notice that the conjunction that introducing an indirect statement is often omitted in casual conversation. **Much prettier.** *Much* is a common intensifier for comparative adjectives and adverbs: *much harder, much more difficult, much less useful*, etc. *A lot* is also used for this purpose: *a lot prettier, a lot more practical, a lot more expensive*. **That = that material.** **Don't you?** The rising intonation indicates a true question, requiring an answer.
- **I like them both = I like both of them.** **That one** refers to a piece of material apparently near the first speaker, who referred to it as "*this* material."
- **I see what you mean = I understand (why you like it).** **These colors are more becoming to you.** The strong stress on *are* indicates, in this case, something like: *Now that I have really thought about it...*, or *Taking everything into consideration...* **Becoming to you.** *Becoming* is an adjective meaning *suitable in appearance; having an attractive effect*.
- **Then = in that case; since that is so.**



# Pastimes

---

**Roger:** What do you do in your spare time?

**Barry:** Oh, nothing special. I read... watch TV... go to the movies.

**Roger:** Don't you have any hobbies, like stamp collecting or things like that?

**Barry:** No, I don't have any hobbies. How about you?

**Roger:** I have just one—photography. It's expensive, but it's a lot of fun.

---

## Language Notes

- **Spare time** = *leisure; extra time; free time.*
- **Nothing special** = *no particular thing. I read. . . watch TV ... go to the movies.* Notice the rising intonation on the first two elements of the series.
- **Stamp collecting.** A compound noun. Therefore the principal stress falls on the first word.
- **How about you?** = *Do you have any hobbies?* This question *How about you?* has the effect of directing the original question back to the other speaker.
- **Just** = *only.*



## DIALOG 29

# Weddings

---

**Bonnie:** Guess what! Paul and Susan are engaged!

**Janice:** Really? When did that happen?

**Bonnie:** A week ago. They met last summer-and now, just think... they'll be married soon.

**Janice:** Have they set a date for the wedding'?

**Bonnie:** No, not yet. But Susan says they'd like to get married in November or December. Then they'll go to Hawaii for their honeymoon.

---

## Language Notes

- **Guess what!** = *I have something important to tell you.*
- **Really?** This is a rejoinder meaning *Oh, that's interesting!* It is frequently used in conversation in this way. In this usage, *really* simply expresses an animated interest in the previous speaker's remark-, it does not question the truthfulness of the remark.
- **Just think...** This phrase indicates that the speaker is reflecting with interest on what has just been said or (as in this case) on what he is going to say next.
- **Set a date** = decided on a day when it will take place.
- **They'd like** = *they would like* = *they want*. *They'd like* is a little "softer," a little less positive, than *they want*.



# Effort

---

**Debbie:** I give up! I simply can't learn French!

**Helen:** Why do you say that? I think you're making a lot of progress.

**Debbie:** No, I'm not. I try and try and I still can't speak it very well.

**Helen:** Learning any language takes a lot of effort. But don't give up. Why don't we practice those dialogs together?

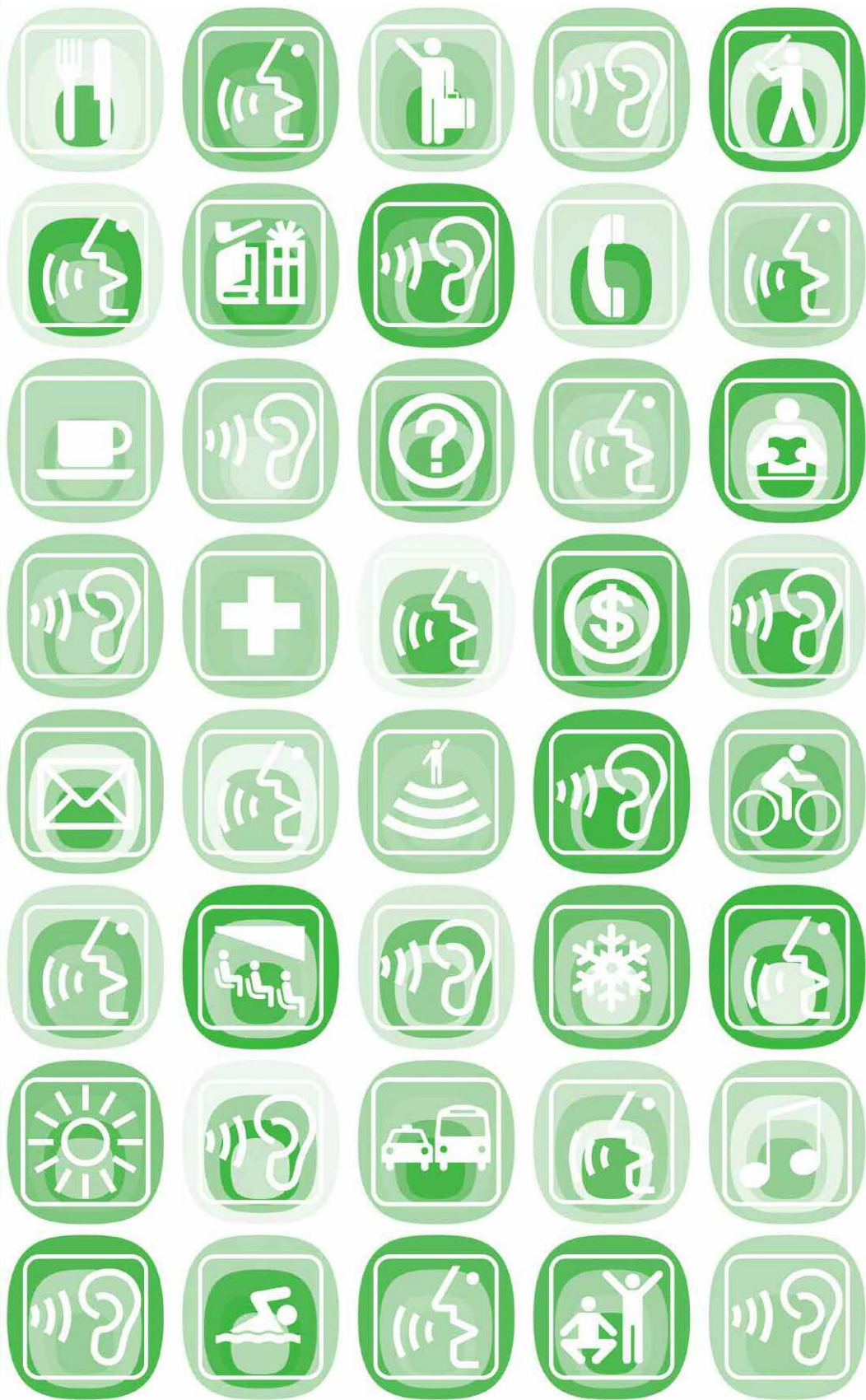
**Debbie:** Good idea. That just might help.

---

## Language Notes

- **Give up** = *stop trying; abandon effort*. **Simply** = *absolutely, completely, clearly*.
- **I try and try** = *I try again and again*. Other examples of repetition of the verb to express continuous or repeated activity: *I read and read, and I still can't understand it. He writes and writes, but he never produces a worthwhile composition. The children play and play that game and never seem to get tired of it.*
- **Good idea** = *That's a good idea*. **That just might help** = *That might, in fact, be a helpful thing to do.*





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