



Life in English Podcast

Transcript

&

Key Vocabulary

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Coffee with Kaizen #24 - Idioms Are for Idiots

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Coffee with Kaizen #24 - Idioms Are for Idiots

Sep 15, 2021

[00:00:00] Tony Kaizen: Idioms are for idiots.

[00:00:02] INTRO MUSIC

[00:00:07] Tony Kaizen: All right. Good morning, my friend, this is Coffee with Kaizen number 24. And like I said, in the title, I want you to know that idioms are for **fucking¹** idiots.

[00:00:18] Now, hopefully, you know, the title is not meant to be taken seriously. I'm not saying that you're an idiot for wanting to learn idioms.

[00:00:25] I'm not saying you're an idiot if you use idioms in your daily conversations and things like that. But the message or the point of this episode is something that I think a lot of learners of English don't understand, but **desperately²** need to understand, because not just in my podcast episodes, but also the videos I post online and social media and **stuff³** like that, a lot of people are always asking, can you teach us more idioms? Can you teach us more slang? Can you teach us how to sound more natural and things like that.

¹ (in this context) used to emphasize a statement, especially an angry one

² extremely or very much

³ a substance, especially when you do not know or say exactly what it is (a synonym for the word 'things')

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[00:00:55] But what I think a lot of people don't understand about slang or idioms or whatever you want to call them, expressions and things like that, is even natives, we don't use them as much as you think we do. Just like I imagine in your native language, if you stop for a second and just think, you're not using idioms, like, all day, every day, you're not using expressions or slang all day, every day. In most cases, obviously everyone's different, but in most cases you're really not. And let me give you an example of exactly what I'm talking about.

[00:01:27] I **got up⁴ at the crack of dawn⁵** because **the early bird gets the worm⁶** and you've got to **make hay while the sun is shining⁷**. So I took the train to work and I had my **nose to the grindstone⁸** all day. I didn't eat lunch, but I had a lot of fruit because **an apple a day keeps the doctor away⁹**. And I couldn't wait to **get off¹⁰** work and come home because you know, **home is where the heart is¹¹**. Nobody talks like that. Basically, that entire paragraph was nothing but different idioms and expressions.

⁴ The past tense of *get up* which means to stand up or to get out of bed

⁵ very early in the morning, especially at the time when the sun first appears

⁶ Whoever arrives first has the best chance of success; some opportunities are only available to the first competitors.

⁷ to take advantage of favorable conditions; to make the most of an opportunity when it is available

⁸ A phrase said of one who is working hard and/or diligently on something.

⁹ Eating healthy foods will keep one from getting sick (and needing to see a doctor).

¹⁰ (in this context) to leave work with permission, usually at the end of the day

¹¹ proverb - One's home is made up of the places and people one loves or cherishes most.

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[00:01:57] And it makes sense. It makes sense, but it sounds forced. It sounds strange. Just unnatural. Nobody talks like that. Nobody uses that many idioms or expressions in every single sentence of every conversation. You see what I'm saying? It's just not natural, you know? So I can understand the desire to learn idioms and expressions and slang and things like that because you want to sound like a native.

[00:02:23] You want to sound more natural, but what you need to understand is what actually sounds natural is being understood. That's natural. And you don't need idioms or expressions or slang for that to happen. **In fact¹²**, it's actually better if you don't focus on those things. Because what I'm trying to say is a lot of people who are learning English, and are constantly asking, "Can you teach us idioms, expressions and slang?" Most of the time, those same people can't even express themselves clearly or **concisely¹³** in a conversation with another person. You see what I'm saying?

[00:03:01] So it's like, they're trying to learn something that is, we can say intermediate or advanced level when they can't even do the basic stuff. You know? So really what I'm trying to say is you have to **crawl¹⁴** before you walk, and you have to walk before you **jog¹⁵**, and jog before you run, and run before you **sprint¹⁶**.

¹² Actually

¹³ shortly and clearly, expressing what needs to be said without unnecessary words

¹⁴ to move along on hands and knees or with your body stretched out along a surface

¹⁵ to run at a slow, regular speed, especially as a form of exercise

¹⁶ to run as fast as you can over a short distance, either in a race or because you are in a great hurry to get somewhere

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Learning happens in stages, I think, and a lot of people try to skip the fundamental stages because they just want to get to the fun, more advanced, you know, natural or native speech. But what you got to understand is natives on a daily basis in my language, and most likely yours, we use very simple language on a day-to-day basis.

[00:03:42] You know, idioms and like slang and expressions, even **curse words**¹⁷ and things like that. It's kind of like salt. Let me give you an example. So just follow me for a second. It's kind of like salt on your food. Salt can do amazing things for food. Food without salt is very **bland**¹⁸, right? It's um, the flavor is not as good as it is with salt, you know, food without salt for a lot of people, including myself... it's just **missing**¹⁹ something. It doesn't have a rich flavor. You see, but if you put salt on all your food, every single square **inch**²⁰ of the food on the fries and the chicken and the vegetables, I mean just **coat**²¹ all the food and salt, it's going to be **disgusting**²², it's going to be too much to **handle**²³. It's too much salt.

[00:04:30] There is a **such** thing as too much salt. Hopefully, I'm making sense. And it's the same thing with slang, curse words, expressions, idioms, and all that. It's

¹⁷ Rude words or phrases

¹⁸ lacking a strong or particular flavor; not interesting

¹⁹ Something that is missing cannot be found because it is not where it should be

²⁰ a unit used for measuring length, approximately equal to 2.54 centimeters

²¹ (in this context) to cover something with a layer of a particular substance

²² extremely unpleasant or unacceptable

²³ to deal with; withstand

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meant to be placed into the conversation, let's say, **tastefully**²⁴, you know? Here and there, not everywhere. Just boom, a little bit there. Boom. A little bit there to give it a little bit of extra flavor. It's meant to complement the actual **dish**²⁵, the actual food, the **substance**²⁶ of the meal, the salt is not the substance. It's the complement. You see what I'm saying? So it's the same thing with idioms, expressions, uh, slang, whatever you want to call it, we use it here and there when the time is right.

[00:05:11] So again, I'm not saying you're an idiot for wanting to learn slang. I'm not saying you're an idiot for wanting to learn idioms. I'm also not saying don't learn those things. That's not my point. That's not what I'm trying to say. I'm just saying, if you haven't mastered the basics, if you cannot comfortably just have a normal conversation with another person. You know, you really don't need to be focused on idioms and expressions and slang and sounding like a native because your average native speaker uses very, very, very basic language on a day-to-day basis.

[00:05:42] So master that first and then move on to the fun stuff, **quote unquote**²⁷, like with every other skill, you know? You're not going to play like Messi week number two of learning how to play soccer. You know? You gotta learn how to pass.

²⁴ in a way that shows style and quality and is not likely to offend anyone

²⁵ food prepared in a particular way as part of a meal

²⁶ The most important part

²⁷ Used to indicate that the specific phrasing that is about to be said is or may be ironic or considered by the speaker as misrepresenting reality.

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You know what I'm saying? Play with both feet, learn how to **dribble**²⁸. You're trying to do all this extra **fancy**²⁹ shit when you can't even do the basics.

[00:06:04] So slow down, be patient. Focus on the fundamentals, because that is the foundation of everything we say. In any language, you've got to master the fundamentals. So don't worry too much about idioms, slang, expressions, stuff like that. The key to sounding natural is mastering the basics. So until you do that, you know, you really, in my opinion, this is just my humble opinion, you shouldn't be focused on anything other than that. All right?

[00:06:34] You gotta crawl before you walk.

[00:06:37] Peace.

[00:06:38] OUTRO MUSIC

²⁸ in soccer or hockey, to move a ball along the ground with repeated small kicks or hits, or (in basketball) to move a ball by repeatedly hitting it against the floor with your hand

²⁹ decorative or complicated

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Key vocabulary

fucking: (in this context) used to emphasize a statement, especially an angry one

Desperately: extremely or very much

Stuff: a substance, especially when you do not know or say exactly what it is (a synonym for the word 'things')

Got up: The past tense of get up which means to stand up or to get out of bed

At the crack of dawn: very early in the morning, especially at the time when the sun first appears

The early bird gets the worm: Whoever arrives first has the best chance of success; some opportunities are only available to the first competitors.

Make hay while the sun is shining: to take advantage of favorable conditions; to make the most of an opportunity when it is available

Nose to the grindstone: A phrase said of one who is working hard and/or diligently on something.

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An apple a day keeps the doctor away: Eating healthy foods will keep one from getting sick (and needing to see a doctor).

Get off: (in this context) to leave work with permission, usually at the end of the day

Home is where the heart is: *proverb* - One's home is made up of the places and people one loves or cherishes most.

In fact: actually

Concisely: shortly and clearly, expressing what needs to be said without unnecessary words

Crawl: to move along on hands and knees or with your body stretched out along a surface

Jog: to run at a slow, regular speed, especially as a form of exercise

Sprint: to run as fast as you can over a short distance, either in a race or because you are in a great hurry to get somewhere

Curse words: Rude words or phrases

Bland: lacking a strong or particular flavor; not interesting

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Missing: Something that is missing cannot be found because it is not where it should be

Inch: a unit used for measuring length, approximately equal to 2.54 centimeters

Coat: (in this context) to cover something with a layer of a particular substance

Disgusting: extremely unpleasant or unacceptable

Handle: to deal with; withstand

Tastefully: in a way that shows style and quality and is not likely to offend anyone

Dish: food prepared in a particular way as part of a meal

Substance: the most important part

Quote, unquote: Used to indicate that the specific phrasing that is about to be said is or may be ironic or considered by the speaker as misrepresenting reality.

Dribble: in soccer or hockey, to move a ball along the ground with repeated small kicks or hits, or (in basketball) to move a ball by repeatedly hitting it against the floor with your hand

Fancy: decorative or complicated