
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Vocabulary

Chunks of language



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Finn

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. I'm Finn...

Alice

And I'm Alice. In today's show we're going to look chunks of language.

Finn

Yes, and by chunks of language we mean groups of words that naturally go together. And we're going to do that by listening to Kirsten, a student from Germany, talking about her typical morning.

Alice

We'll look closely at the chunks of language Kirsten uses...

Finn

We'll have a quiz to see what we've learnt...

Alice

And we'll bring you a top tip for learning vocabulary.

Finn

But before all that, we're going to hear from Kirsten, who's studying right here in London.

Alice

She's talking about her typical college day. Now, two questions for you to think about while you listen. First, why does Kirsten have to leave?

Finn

And second, why do you think Kirsten's English sounds a little bit unnatural?

Alice

Let's find out.

Insert 1

My typical morning? Well, I never go out on an *unfilled stomach*, so before class, I usually have a *complete English breakfast* – I love it. Getting to class can *take a big time* because it is *the rush period*. But when I get to class it is a *lot of enjoyment* because my classmates come from *all over the earth*. Anyway, I must go into class right now, but I'll be *back in a period*.

Alice

So, why does she have to leave?

Finn

She has to go to class. Well done if you got that. But why did Kirsten's English sound a little bit unnatural?

Alice

Well, we understood her, but she did make some unusual word choices.

Finn

Yes. And that's because she made some mistakes when she tried to use English fixed expressions, or chunks of language.

Alice

Chunks are groups of words that naturally go together – they are fixed expressions and they can't usually be changed. So instead of learning them word by word, we can think of them as one complete piece of language. Let's look at some of Kirsten's chunks.

Finn

First she said she doesn't like going out *on an unfilled stomach*. The normal way to say that you are doing something without eating first is to say you're doing something **on an empty stomach**.

Alice

Next she said she likes to eat *a complete English breakfast*. The usual way to describe eggs, bacon, sausage and tomato is **a full English breakfast**.

Finn

Ooh, feeling a bit hungry now. Then she said that going to college *takes a big time*, but the chunk is **to take a long time**.

Alice

And it takes a long time because it is *the rush period* – but the usual expression is **the rush hour**.

Finn

Kirsten told us that class is *a lot of enjoyment*. But we usually say **a lot of fun**.

Alice

It's fun because Kirsten's friends come from *all over the earth* – normally **all over the world**.

Finn

And let's listen to the last sentence again.

Clip 1

Anyway, I must go into class right now, but I'll be *back in a period*.

Finn

So she'll return soon to talk more, but the usual way to say this is **back in a bit**. Or **back in a minute**.

Alice

Great stuff. So, let's listen to Kirsten again, this time with all the correct chunks of language.

Insert 2

My typical morning? Well, I never go out **on an empty stomach**, so before class, I usually have **a full English breakfast** – I love it. Getting to class can **take a long time** because it is **the rush hour**. But when I get to class it's **a lot of fun** because my classmates come from **all over the world**. Anyway, I must go into class right now, but I'll be **back in a bit**.

Finn

Well done Kirsten. It sounded much more natural that time.

Ident

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Alice

So, now it's time for a quiz. You have to finish the sentences with the correct chunk.

Number 1. *I want to learn Chinese, but I think it will...* a) *have a long time*; b) *take a great age*; c) *take a long time*.

Finn

The natural way to say it is: c) *take a long time*.

Alice

Now number 2. *People are learning English...* a) *all over the world*; b) *around the earth*; c) *throughout the planet*.

Finn

People are learning English: a) *all over the world*.

Alice

Well done if you got that.

Finn

That brings us almost to the end of today's show.

Alice

But before we go, here's today's top tip – instead of learning lists of vocabulary word by word, try picking up natural chunks of language that you hear people using. Learning these chunks will make your English sound much more natural.

Finn

Great advice. There's more about this at [BBC learning English dot com](http://BBClearningEnglish.com). Please join us again for six-minute vocabulary.

Both

Goodbye!

Vocabulary

to do something on an empty stomach

to do something without eating first

a full English breakfast

a cooked breakfast, usually with bacon, sausage, eggs, mushrooms, beans, tomatoes, toast and tea

to take a long time

to happen slowly

the rush hour

the period of time in the morning and evening when the traffic is very busy with people going to and from work

a lot of fun

very enjoyable

all over the world

everywhere around the earth

(I'll be) back in a bit

(I'll) return soon