
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

How to haggle



This is not a word-for-word transcript

STING

Finn

Hi, this is Finn and I've got some special language for you today. And how about this: I might even save you some money! Learn English and save money? Well, today we're talking about haggling – now that's what we do when we're trying to buy something for a cheaper price – like at a market, or on holiday.

Haggling is, of course, very common in many different cultures, and here in the UK people do haggle but they don't really do it in big shops: you might hear it, maybe, at a market – or, as we're going to hear – if you're buying something expensive like a second-hand car.

Now, Rob is looking for a good deal. But will Neil – who's selling – be happy with the price? Let's listen. And while you do, listen out for a particular phrase – instead of saying 'could you sell it for...', what does Rob say?

Rob

Excuse me. How much for the Vauxhall over there?

Neil

Oh the Vauxhall, oh yeah, that's a **bargain**. £700.

Rob

700?

Neil

Yeah. It'll cost you at least 800 anywhere else.

Rob

Could you do it for 500?

Neil

500? No, sorry, no: I can sell this car for 700, I'm sure of it.

Rob

I've got the cash. **You couldn't do it for 550?**

Neil

No.

Rob

You couldn't do a bit cheaper, could you?

Neil

Well, I tell you what, **I could probably do it for about 650.**

Finn

Ok, let's pause their haggling right there. Did you hear the phrase Rob used? Instead of saying 'Could you sell it for £500', Rob said:

Rob

Could you do it for 500?

Finn

Do it. Simple, huh? **Could you do it for 500?**

Rob

Could you do it for 500?

Finn

You could also say **Can you do it for £500** – **can** rather than **could**. But **could** is a little bit more polite. Now listen to these examples of it as well – you can use it in the negative, with **couldn't**:

Rob

You couldn't do it for 550? You couldn't do it a bit cheaper, could you?

Finn

You couldn't do it for 550? You couldn't do a bit cheaper, could you? Now remember, haggling goes both ways – and the seller will use lots of language to keep the price high. So did you notice the language Neil used – he called it a **bargain** – that's a good price, and said it would cost more in other shops.

Neil

Oh the Vauxhall, oh yeah, that's a **bargain**. £700.

Rob

700?

Neil

It'll cost you at least 800 anywhere else.

Finn

But Rob is persistent – he doesn't give up! He's succeeded in getting the price down by £50 already. You could say – Neil has **knocked off** £50. Now, **knocked off** means he's taken

the price down by £50. Now, let's listen to the end of their conversation – the end of their haggling. How much does Neil **knock off** in the end?

Neil

I tell you what, **I could probably do it for about 650.**

Rob

650?

Neil

650, yeah. **You can't say fairer than that.**

Rob

Well, is that really your best price?

Neil

It's my best price. 650. Come on.

Rob

I've got all the cash here. I haven't got 650, I've got 600. I'll give you 600 for it.

Neil

630, how about that? I've just **knocked off** another £20.

Rob

It's too much: **I haven't got that kind of money.** Look, I saw it down the road for 600. In fact, I think I might go there and buy it. Thanks anyway, bye.

Neil

Hang on, hang on, let's not be **silly** here. Let's not be silly here. I'll tell you what. 600.

Rob

600. It's a deal.

Neil

Go on then.

Finn

So how much did Neil **knock off**? Well the final price was £600, and it started at £700 – so he **knocked off** £100. How did Rob do this? Well, he used another good phrase: **I haven't got that kind of money.**

Rob

It's too much: **I haven't got that kind of money.**

Finn

And he also did something I always do if I'm haggling and I can't get the price down – he started to walk away.

Rob

I saw it down the road for 600. In fact, I think I might go there and buy it. Thanks anyway, bye.

Neil

Hang on, hang on...

Finn

It's a bit naughty, isn't it - but it tends to work! Anyway, finally they reached a deal. And what did Neil say at the very end?

Neil

600.

Rob

600. It's a deal.

Neil

Go on then.

Finn

Go on then. You'll often hear this in spoken English – in a haggling situation like this, so if you hear it, well done – your haggling has been successful, and it's time to pay up!

Neil

600.

Rob

600. It's a deal.

Neil

Go on then.

Finn

That's it for this time, but let me know if you manage to use any of this language next time you haggle. You might even save some money. I'll leave you with their conversation one last time.

Rob

Excuse me. How much for the Vauxhall over there?

Neil

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Neil

Hang on, hang on, let's not be **silly** here. Let's not be silly here. I'll tell you what. 600.

Rob

600. It's a deal.

Neil
Go on then.

Key language

Here are the 'haggling expressions' that Finn talked about:

1. 'Do' = sell

When we are haggling, instead of using the verb **sell**, we often use **do**. We use it with **can/can't** and **could/couldn't**:

- *I **can** probably **do it for** about £650.*
- ***Can't** you **do it a bit cheaper**?*
- ***Could** you **do it for** 500?*
- *You **couldn't do it for** £550?*

2. To 'knock off'

This phrasal verb means 'lower the price'.

- *Can you **knock off** another £30?*
- *I could **knock off** £10 for you.*

3. When you've got a deal: 'Go on then'

To show that the price is agreed, it sounds very natural in spoken English for the buyer and/or the seller to say: **Go on then**.

- *Buyer: £600?*
- *Seller: **Go on then**.*
- *Buyer: I'll give you £40 for it.*
- *Seller: **Go on then**.*