

## 5

**DISTINCTIVELY ENGLISH  
WAYS TO SAY IT**

This document provides additional materials relating to Chapter 5 of *Social English Power* by Peter Clarke. For more information, visit [SocialEnglishPower.com](http://SocialEnglishPower.com)

**PRACTICE 5.1**

	<i>Original version</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
RALPH♂	Vanessa, can you spare me* a few minutes? I've got ten people coming round for the History Club, and I'm not ready for them.	Vanessa, can you help me for a few minutes? I've got ten people coming to my home for the History Club, and I'm not ready for them.
VANESSA♀	Well, I'm <u>a bit tight for time</u> myself, cos* I'm going out soon. But I can lend a hand* for a while.	Well, I <u>don't have much time</u> myself, because I'm going out soon. But I can help for a short time.
RALPH	Oh, that would be great. Can you print off 10 copies of an article from the internet for me?	Oh, that would be great. Can you print off 10 copies of an article from the internet for me?
VANESSA	Better not use my printer... the quality is a bit <u>dodgy</u> these days.	Better not use my printer... the quality is <u>unreliable</u> these days.
RALPH	Well, it doesn't have to be perfect; can you at least <u>give it a go</u> ?	Well, it doesn't have to be perfect; can you at least <u>try it</u> ?
VANESSA	OK, sure; just send me the web address. Anything else you need a hand with?	OK, sure; just send me the web address. Anything else you need help with?
RALPH	Yes, there is. I haven't got any milk for the coffee. At least,* I have, but it's a bit <u>iffy</u> cos it's been around* for five days now.	Yes, there is. I haven't got any milk for the coffee. What I mean is, I have got milk, but it <u>might be sour</u> because it's been in my home for five days now.

VANESSA	Wow, you must be really <u>ru</u> <u>sh</u> <u>ed</u> <u>o</u> <u>ff</u> <u>y</u> <u>o</u> <u>u</u> <u>r</u> <u>o</u> <u>f</u> <u>e</u> <u>e</u> <u>t</u> <u>e</u> <u>r</u> <u>e</u> <u>t</u> <u>o</u> <u>t</u> <u>o</u> <u>b</u> <u>u</u> <u>y</u> <u>m</u> <u>i</u> <u>l</u> <u>k</u> <u>.</u>	Wow, you must be really <u>b</u> <u>u</u> <u>s</u> <u>y</u> if you haven't even got time to buy milk.
RALPH	You said it...* we've <u>g</u> <u>o</u> <u>t</u> <u>t</u> <u>h</u> <u>i</u> <u>s</u> <u>c</u> <u>r</u> <u>a</u> <u>z</u> <u>y</u> <u>p</u> <u>r</u> <u>o</u> <u>j</u> <u>e</u> <u>c</u> <u>t</u> <u>o</u> <u>n</u> <u>a</u> <u>t</u> <u>w</u> <u>o</u> <u>r</u> <u>k</u> <u>;</u> we're all <u>w</u> <u>o</u> <u>r</u> <u>k</u> <u>i</u> <u>n</u> <u>g</u> <u>o</u> <u>u</u> <u>r</u> <u>b</u> <u>u</u> <u>t</u> <u>t</u> <u>s</u> <u>o</u> <u>f</u> <u>t</u> <u>o</u> <u>g</u> <u>e</u> <u>t</u> <u>i</u> <u>t</u> <u>f</u> <u>i</u> <u>n</u> <u>i</u> <u>s</u> <u>h</u> <u>e</u> <u>d</u> <u>o</u> <u>n</u> <u>t</u> <u>i</u> <u>m</u> <u>e</u> <u>.</u>	That's right... we're <u>v</u> <u>e</u> <u>r</u> <u>y</u> <u>b</u> <u>u</u> <u>s</u> <u>y</u> <u>w</u> <u>i</u> <u>t</u> <u>h</u> <u>a</u> <u>c</u> <u>r</u> <u>a</u> <u>z</u> <u>y</u> <u>p</u> <u>r</u> <u>o</u> <u>j</u> <u>e</u> <u>c</u> <u>t</u> <u>a</u> <u>t</u> <u>w</u> <u>o</u> <u>r</u> <u>k</u> <u>;</u> we're all <u>w</u> <u>o</u> <u>r</u> <u>k</u> <u>i</u> <u>n</u> <u>g</u> <u>v</u> <u>e</u> <u>r</u> <u>y</u> <u>h</u> <u>a</u> <u>r</u> <u>d</u> <u>t</u> <u>o</u> <u>g</u> <u>e</u> <u>t</u> <u>i</u> <u>t</u> <u>f</u> <u>i</u> <u>n</u> <u>i</u> <u>s</u> <u>h</u> <u>e</u> <u>d</u> <u>o</u> <u>n</u> <u>t</u> <u>i</u> <u>m</u> <u>e</u> <u>.</u>
VANESSA	Poor Ralph. Just make sure you don't <u>w</u> <u>o</u> <u>r</u> <u>k</u> <u>y</u> <u>o</u> <u>u</u> <u>r</u> <u>s</u> <u>e</u> <u>r</u> <u>f</u> <u>i</u> <u>n</u> <u>t</u> <u>o</u> <u>t</u> <u>h</u> <u>e</u> <u>g</u> <u>r</u> <u>o</u> <u>u</u> <u>n</u> <u>d</u> <u>.</u>	Poor Ralph. Just make sure you don't <u>b</u> <u>e</u> <u>c</u> <u>o</u> <u>m</u> <u>e</u> <u>e</u> <u>x</u> <u>h</u> <u>a</u> <u>u</u> <u>s</u> <u>t</u> <u>e</u> <u>d</u> <u>.</u>

*\*Spare me (some time, money etc): give me a small amount of something to help me in an emergency*

*Cos: because*

*Lend a hand: help (see Chapter 4)*

*At least: That is to say, what I mean is*

*Around: here*

*You said it: That's correct*

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### **PRACTICE 5.3: POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

3. I'd rather you didn't, if you don't mind.
4. I'd rather you didn't, if you don't mind.
5. I'd rather not, thanks.
6. Thanks, but I'd better spend the time studying.
7. I'd rather/sooner be rich. If you're rich, it's easier to be happy.
8. I'd rather buy the cheap one. I'm saving up for a holiday.
9. I'd rather not, thanks. It sounds a bit too tough for me.
10. I'd sooner die than marry you.

### **PRACTICE 5.4: POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

These answers are given as examples of how to use the expressions given.

3. It's been yonks since the last time I was on a train or bus when it broke down. It only happens to me once in a blue moon.
4. I've lost my wallet a handful of times. The last time was just/only last

week.

5. I'm constantly forgetting my phone number. I forgot it yesterday when I was filling in a form.
6. I've moved house quite a few times. The last time was about a year ago.
7. I eat frogs' legs once in a while. The last time was a couple of years ago.
8. I change my hairstyle all the time. Only last week I got it re-styled.
9. I take up (*start learning*) something new from time to time. The last time was a few years back.
10. I go skiing every so often. I last went a few months ago.
11. I quite often get a new computer or phone. Having said that,\* I've been using this one for over a year now. *\*Having said that: On the other hand, Despite what I just said.*
12. I only go to the Emergency Room once in a blue moon. I can't remember the last time I had an accident.

### **PRACTICE 5.5: POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

These answers are given as examples of how to use the expressions given.

3. It only takes me two ticks to wash my hair, because it's really short.
4. It takes ages to grow your hair that long.
5. It takes a little while to walk to the nearest post office.
6. It would take yonks to walk to the capital city. (*"would take" because we are not planning to actually do that.*)
7. It takes a fair while for me to learn a new song.
8. It takes me years to learn a new language.
9. It takes hours to cook a dinner for six.
10. It only takes a jiffy to order a takeaway, even for 6 people.
11. It takes me for ever to choose clothes to buy.
12. It takes a while to choose presents for other people.

**PRACTICE 5.6: POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

These answers are given as examples of how to use the expressions given.

3. It won't take me a minute to finish my tea.
4. It shouldn't take too long to make your passport photos.
5. It oughtn't to take long to book a flight on the internet.
6. His speech shouldn't last too long.
7. Your clothes shouldn't take long to dry.
8. It won't take a jiffy to fetch my umbrella before we go out.

**PRACTICE 5.7: POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

3. Yeah, too right. I'm forever catching cold these days.
4. I'm really sorry. But I only forget once in a blue moon, not every time.
5. Is that right? Maybe I should change mine, then. I've been using the same one for yonks.
6. Should be a great get-together, then. Our family tries to get together once in a while, too.
7. Yes, me too! It does seem like forever since the last one.

**PRACTICE 5.9**

(1)

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BOBBY	I heard on the grapevine that you're getting married soon.
MISSY	No way! Where in the world did you get that from?
BOBBY	I thought someone said it in class recently.

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(2)

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MAVIS♀	I'm struggling a bit here. I've got to find some information for my assignment, but I'm not sure where to start.
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ZAK                    Ask your teacher. She'll probably recommend such and such a book by Professor So-and-so.

MAVIS                    Oh man, that sounds tedious. I think I'd rather just go online and do some searching.

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(3)

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MARCO♂                Tanya, I don't think you should use the mobile phone as much as you do. You spend ages talking on it every day.

TANYA♀                But I'm crazy about my phone. I love keeping in touch with people through it. What's the big deal? (= *What's the problem?*)

MARCO                Some say the radiation from the phone is bad for the brain.

TANYA                Oh, come on, Marco. You shouldn't believe everything you hear on the grapevine.

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(4)

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LARISSA♀              Loads of people are saying school's going to be closed tomorrow.

RON♂                    You're kidding! How come?

LARISSA                I don't know; some folks are saying there's supposed to be some kind of big storm on the way.

RON                      Well, don't get too excited about a free holiday; wait until the school makes an announcement.

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### **PRACTICE 5.10: EXAGGERATION**

1. I have repeated this maths problem over and over again...
2. I've got the mother of all headaches. (*See also Chapter 9 for more ways to say this.*)
3. It costs thousands of dollars to study abroad.

4. Zillions of people wanted to go...
5. I've tried to learn the word *incredible* heaps of times...
6. ...there's going to be a ginormous/massive row.
7. ...masses/tons of people go to the beach.

### **PRACTICE 5.11**

Notice that the first 'as' is deleted in some cases. It is always optional.

1. The kitchen is as hot as an oven.
2. My feet are as cold as ice.
3. The customer service was fast as lightning.
4. The waiter is being as slow as a tortoise.
5. This book is dull as ditchwater ( = *very boring*).
6. My boss's explanation was as clear as mud ( = *impossible to understand*).
7. My sister is as skinny as a rake.

### **PRACTICE 5.12**

Hi bro/sis, how are you doing? I'm really excited cos I just ordered my new car. The old one has been giving me lots of problems. It's broken down several times, been to the garage for repair many times, and still they can't get it sorted. It's just been a big inconvenience. Worst of all is the a/c: it's too hot in summer and too cold in winter—makes my fingers feel very cold.

Anyway, the old motor is history - or soon will be! I've ordered a brand spanking new Ford FX500, goes really fast and looks really cool. A whopping improvement over the old one, which was very dull and super ugly. Can't wait to give you a ride next time you're over.

### **PRACTICE 5.13**

1. Best: trickle. Possible: drip-drip. Alternative: It only has a small flow of customers.
2. Best: gurgling. Possible: splashing. Alternative: The noise from the water keeps me awake.
3. Best: dripping. Possible: splattering. Alternative: It's making a mess on the floor.
4. Best: splash. Possible: boom. Alternative: Trish fell dramatically into the swimming pool.
5. Best: booming. Possible: roaring (upwards). Alternative: House prices are rocketing up.
6. Best: thud. Possible: boom. Alternative: Chris dropped his book bag noisily on the bedroom floor.
7. Best: boomed. Possible: thudded. Alternative: The noise went all around the room.
8. Best: banging. Possible: smacking. Alternative: He was pounding the table.
9. Best: crunchy. Alternative: They're really crispy.
10. Best: clapping. Alternative: The audience responded with long and enthusiastic applause.
11. Best: flapping. Possible: whooshing. Alternative: The baby birds are exercising their wings.
12. Best: rustle. Possible: whisper. Alternative: There's no talking, just the sound of papers quietly moving.
13. Best: swished. Possible: whooshed. Alternative: The curtain opened with a flourish.
14. Best: ticking. Alternative: Climate change is likely to cause major problems in the future.
15. Best: crack. Alternative: The wall has a big fracture in it.
16. Best: smashed. Possible: shattered. Alternative: I dropped my watch and it broke into lots of pieces.
17. Best: shatterproof. Possible: unsmashable. Alternative:

They're designed not to break when dropped.

18. Best: chinking. Possible: rattling. Alternative: The glasses are knocking together on the tray.
19. Best: pounding. Possible: thump-thump. Alternative: apart from the dancers' footsteps from the dance studio upstairs.
20. Best: pounding. Alternative: I've got a really severe (throbbing, nasty, intense) headache.
21. Best: rattling. Possible: ticking. Alternative: What's causing that disturbing noise from this fan?
22. Best: sighed. Possible: tut-tutted. Alternative: his response was disappointed, but very restrained.
23. Best: murmur. Possible: whisper. Alternative: the students stopped talking aloud and just had private conversations in a quiet voice.
24. Best: mumble. Possible: murmur. Alternative: I wish she would speak loud and clear on the phone.

### **PRACTICE 5.14**

1. Floppy disks are a storage medium for computers—now mostly obsolete. The magnetic disk inside the case is actually soft and floppy, in contrast to a hard disk, which is rigid.
2. Possibly related to sports: the game really gets important when physical contact is made between players (e.g. in rugby, American football etc.)
3. Possibly referring to a situation where you either succeed, or get crushed (destroyed).
4. Distressed or confused birds (e.g. if trapped inside a building) will flap their wings wildly.
5. It means the sound of someone or something moving past you really quickly. The sports company wants to give the feeling of speed and energy.
6. Possibly referring to the sound of a woman in an expensive silk dress moving past you.
7. Your heart beats regularly, like a clock. The regular sound of a clock is called *ticking*.



8. The emotional feeling is as if your heart has been broken into small pieces.
9. *Ivories* refers to a piano (the white keys have been made of ivory in the past). *Tinkle* refers to the sound of a piano.
10. A rattlesnake has a hollow box at the end of its tail, containing small beads that make a frightening noise (rattling) when the snake shakes its tail.
11. *Howl* refers to the loud sound of people laughing at the mistake.
12. Possibly referring to the final performance of a stage artiste such as a comedian, who has been “clapped out” (i.e. left the stage to audience applause) for the last time.
13. In the past, trains would stop at small stations only if a passenger requested the driver to stop by sounding a special whistle.
14. May refer to the sound of the ball hitting an early kind of racket (bat), which was made of tough skin on a frame.
15. Refers to the sound of the plane’s engines.

### **PRACTICE 5.15**

1. Croak
2. Bray, hee-haw
3. Hoot
4. Coo
5. Trumpet
6. Buzz
7. Yelp, gibber
8. Buzz

### **PRACTICE 5.16**

1. Clunkers or bangers are old cars that (in old times) would have made clunking or banging sounds as they drive. The “cash for

clunkers” programme was a government initiative to boost the economy by giving owners of old cars cash to buy new ones.

2. A reminder to fasten your seat belt (click) every time you get in the car and close the door (clunk).
3. The sound of milk pouring on a famous brand of breakfast cereal. The cereal is made of puffed-up rice balls that crackle when wetted.
4. The sound of two indigestion (stomach pain) pills falling into a glass of water, ready to be drunk. The “fizz” is from carbon dioxide gas bubbles released by the pills.

### **PRACTICE 5.17**

1. toot, parp
2. boom, rumble, thunder, roll, bang, thud, rat-a-tat
3. boom, boom-chick
4. crash, clash, tish
5. ting
6. twang
7. toot, tootle
8. oompah (refers to the repeated up and down notes it plays in marching band music)
9. tinkle
10. skirl, bray