

Swearing

"My only regret is that I didn't tell enough people to fuck off." -Anonymous grandma

Warm up:

- What are your favourite swear words in English?
- What are your favourite swear words in your native language?
- Do you know anyone who swears a lot?
- In what situations do you swear?
- Are there any swear words (in English or your native language) that you really can't stand?



English does not have that many commonly used swear words. Unfortunately, the most common swear words have many meanings, and context is very important. For example, the word "fuck" is one of the most versatile words in the English language.



1. Read the sentences and match the underlined phrase with its meaning.

- I'm so fucking tired of this system, it must have been designed by monkeys.
 - My essay is due in tomorrow and I haven't even started, I'm so fucked.
 - That movie is so fucked up, I couldn't sleep after watching it.
 - I had the worst day, and then came home to find out I left the stove on. Fucking hell.
 - He seems like a nice guy, but he'll fuck you over the first chance he gets.
 - I'm sorry, I fucked up, I accidentally lost your car keys.
 - She didn't get her boyfriend a Christmas present, she doesn't give a fuck about him.
 - Could you please just fuck off? I don't want to talk to you.
1. To betray someone
 2. Used to emphasize an adjective or noun.
 3. An aggressive way of asking someone to go away.
 4. To not care about something or someone
 5. Something that is very disturbing or very damaged.
 6. An exclamation usually used to express frustration or surprise.
 7. To have no chance, to be in a very bad situation.
 8. To make a very bad mistake, to fail dramatically.





2. Ask and answer the following questions with a partner.

- a) When was the last time you or someone you know really fucked up?
- b) What is something you really don't give a fuck about?
- c) Is there anyone in your life you wish you could tell to fuck off?
- d) What is something you think is fucking amazing (a food, a movie, a person etc)?
- e) Have you ever been fucked over by a person or organisation?

WTF??

We can also make many statements or questions stronger or more dramatic by adding "the fuck" into the sentence. This often goes directly after open question words such as "what", "how", or "why."

Eg *"Why the fuck did you quit your job??"*

This is also commonly added between the verb and the preposition in phrasal verbs such as "wake up", "hang up", or "hurry up."

Eg *"You're driving too fast, slow the fuck down."*



3. Read the sentences below and find places where you could add "the fuck" to make them more impactful sentences.

- a) Where are you going?
- b) Can you please shut up?
- c) I've never seen you before, who are you?
- d) This is taking too long, hurry up!
- e) Why are you wearing a skirt when it's minus 5 degrees?
- f) It's a birthday party, could you please cheer up?
- g) Ok, everybody calm down, it's not such a big deal.
- h) What are you looking at?



Insults

Below is a collection of common swearing insults in English.

asshole son of a bitch dick fuckhead bastard fucking idiot
wanker (British English) piece of shit cocksucker shithead bitch

- Which of these words have you heard before?
- Which do you like the sound of?
- Do you know anyone that you think these words apply to?

Shit

The word shit can mean many things, but the most common meaning is simply “bad.”

Eg. *“That movie was so shit, I can’t believe I paid to see it.”*

However, it can also simply mean “stuff”

Eg. *“I’m sorry, there’s a lot of shit in my car.”*

We can also use “I don’t give a shit” in the same way as “I don’t give a fuck.”

Eg. *“My boss doesn’t give a shit about people being late.”*

The word “crap” can also be used in most situations as a slightly more polite version of shit, although crap is still considered a swear word.

Eg. *“This car is a piece of crap, I need to get a new one.”*

 4. Jane and Tom are going on a trip together. Listen to the audio and answer the questions.

- How long have Jane and Tom been waiting?
- Why was the train cancelled?
- Why are they going to Oxford?
- How are they going to get to Oxford?
- What would you do in this situation?





5. Read through some of the sentences from the audio and explain in your own words what the underlined phrase means.

- a) "They keep saying it will be here, but I think they're full of shit."
- b) "If the train is delayed one more time I'm gonna lose my shit."
- c) "It's gonna cost a shitload."
- d) "I don't give a fuck about the money."

Bitch

Most swear words in English have multiple meanings, and the word "bitch" is no exception. "Bitch" is usually used to mean a woman who is rude or aggressive.

Eg. *"That librarian is such a bitch, she's never nice to anyone"*

However, it can also be used to describe a man who is too weak or easily scared (basically the opposite of what is meant when referring to a woman as a bitch).

Eg. *"Don't be such a bitch, just grab the money and run!"*

The word can also be used to mean to talk about someone behind their back.

Eg. *"He's always bitching about his housemates, it's all he ever talks about!"*

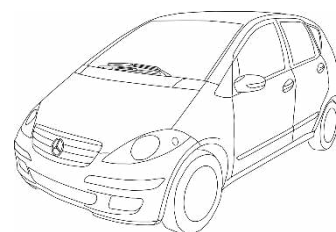
In addition, it can be used to describe something that is particularly difficult or frustrating.

Eg. *"That test was a bitch, but somehow I passed."*



6. Jane and Tom are driving to Oxford. Listen to the audio and answer the questions.

- a) What is the speed limit on the highway?
- b) Why doesn't Tom want to drive faster?
- c) Who bitches about Jane, and what do they say about her?
- d) Why does Tom think it doesn't really matter if they are late?





7. Read through some of the sentences from the audio and explain in your own words what the underlined phrase means.

- a) "stop being such a bitch and drive faster!"
- b) "I don't give a fuck about the speed limit"
- c) "I'm sorry, I'm being a bitch. I'm just super stressed."
- d) "It's my best friend's wedding Tom. I cannot fuck this up."
- e) "I know those girls, even if you're on time, they'll find another reason to bitch about you."

When English speakers swear, we sometimes use the phrase "pardon my French" as a light-hearted way of apologizing for swearing.

Eg. *"Pardon my French, but that man is the biggest asshole I've ever met."*



8. Jane and Tom are almost at the wedding. Listen to the audio and answer the questions.

- a) Why is Jane frustrated by the car ahead of them?
- b) Why does Tom think Jane using the word "wanker" is funny?
- c) What does Tom think about British people's driving?
- d) How did Jane fuck up?



9. Read through some of the sentences from the audio and explain in your own words what the underlined phrase means.

- a) "The guy in front of you is driving like a wanker."
- b) "Why are the British so shit at driving?"
- c) "Holy fuck jane you'd better be fucking kidding me!"
- d) "I'm so sorry. I fucked up."



10. Pairwork: ask and answer the following questions with a partner.

- a) Is there a city or town or place in your country that you think is shit?
- b) What is something a lot of people in your country bitch about?
- c) Is there a celebrity or politician you think is an asshole/dick/fucking idiot?
- d) When was the last time you saw someone lose their shit?
- e) What is a brand, company, or product that you think is crap?

Note: It can be very difficult to tell how offensive a word is in a second language. You should always be careful with swear words in English, because it can be quite easy to use them in the wrong context and offend somebody.