

Stop Saying “Very Good”: 3 Stronger English Words

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

95 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Martin, the restaurant was very good.

Good.

And Elena's English presentation was very good.

Also good.

And the winner's performance was very, very good.

Julia, I think your vocabulary needs help.

But everything was good.

Yes.

But not everything was good in the same way.

I see.

This is going to become a vocabulary lesson, isn't it?

An excellent vocabulary lesson.

Welcome to Your English Toolbox and Practice Arena Five-Minute English.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

Today we are replacing very good with three more precise words: excellent, impressive and outstanding.

Let us return to the restaurant.

The food was fresh, the service was friendly and every dish was prepared perfectly.

Then the restaurant was excellent.

Excellent means extremely good in quality.

We use it for food, service, work, ideas or general quality.

Excellent service.

An excellent meal.

Excellent work.



It is a strong, clear alternative to very good.

Now, Elena's presentation.

She has studied English for only six months.

And she spoke for ten minutes without notes, answered difficult questions and stayed calm.

Her English was not perfect, but what she achieved was impressive.

Exactly.

Impressive describes something that creates admiration or makes people notice it.

A difficult achievement or fast improvement can be impressive.

And an impressive presentation makes the audience think, "That took skill or effort."

There is a useful grammar difference here.

The presentation was impressive.

The audience was impressed.

Impressive describes the thing.

Impressed describes how a person feels.

Now, what about the winner's performance?

Twelve people entered the competition, but one speaker was clearly better than everyone else.

Then her performance was outstanding.

Outstanding means exceptionally good, especially when something stands above the rest.

We say an outstanding performance, student or result.

So excellent focuses on very high quality.

Impressive focuses on the admiration something creates.

And outstanding suggests exceptional quality compared with others.

Exactly.

Can one performance be all three?

Yes.

The words overlap, but the picture you choose changes.

There is also a second meaning of outstanding.

An outstanding payment is a payment that has not been completed.

But today we are using outstanding to mean exceptionally good.

Time for a quick challenge.



Say the best word before Julia answers.

Situation one.

A hotel gives you perfect service from beginning to end.

Excellent.

Situation two.

Your friend learns to play a difficult song after only three weeks.

Impressive.

Situation three.

One student receives the highest result in the entire school.

Outstanding.

Final situation.

Complete the sentence: "The audience was blank by her progress."

Impressed.

Think about something you saw or achieved this week.

Was it excellent, impressive or outstanding?

Complete one sentence aloud: "Blank was blank because blank."

Quick recap.

Excellent means extremely good in quality.

Impressive means good in a way that creates admiration.

Outstanding means exceptionally good, often compared with others.

Before you go, open this episode at Your English Toolbox dot com and turn these three words into active English.

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Compare every line with Spanish, German, French or Farsi, and use the vocabulary section to review meanings, grammar, collocations and natural examples.

Use Practice Arena for immediate feedback and a personal speaking challenge.

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Martin, how was my vocabulary today?

Excellent.

Only excellent?

Your improvement was impressive.

And compared with everyone else?

Julia, let us not get carried away.

I was hoping for outstanding.

Perhaps next Thursday.

