

Eat the Frog First: Stop Procrastinating and Do What Matters

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

196 lines

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

Have you ever had one task on your list... just one... that you moved to tomorrow every single day for two weeks?

Oh, I know that task.

And every day you do not do it... it gets a little bigger in your mind.

Heavier.

More uncomfortable.

Until one morning, that one task is the only thing you can think about.

Welcome to Your English Toolbox, the podcast that trains your English while you live your real life.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

Friends, today we are going to talk about that task.

The one you are avoiding right now.

Because Martin has a confession for you.

Two months ago, I had a phone call I needed to make.

It was a difficult conversation about money, with a client who was not going to be happy.

And every morning, I woke up, made coffee, opened my laptop... and did everything except make that call.

I answered small emails.

I organised my desk.

He reorganised his desk three times, friends.

Three times.

And how long did this continue?

For twelve days.

So today, we are going to explore a productivity idea with a very strange name.

Eat the frog.



Productivity writer Brian Tracy popularised this method: identify your most important difficult task, and do it first.

And by the end of this episode, you will have a simple method for starting the task you keep avoiding.

You will also learn natural English for talking about procrastination, priorities and getting things done.

Let us start with the frog.

Julia, imagine someone told you that every morning, before breakfast, you had to eat a frog.

That sounds horrible, Martin.

It does.

But the metaphor is simple.

Your frog is not a real animal.

Your frog is your biggest, hardest or most important task.

The one you are most likely to put off until tomorrow.

The one sitting at the top of your list, staring at you.

So the rule is simple: eat your frog first.

Do the important difficult thing before you check your messages, before you answer easy emails and before small tasks take over your morning.

And if you have two frogs?

Choose the more important one first.

Because here is what many of us do: we clear away the small things first.

We answer the easy emails.

We tell ourselves we are getting ready to do the big task.

But sometimes we are not getting ready.

We are hiding.

That is exactly what I was doing with my phone call.

I was busy... but I was not moving forward.

There is a big difference between being busy and getting something done.

Being busy can feel good in the moment.

But at the end of the day, the frog is still sitting there.

Still waiting for you tomorrow.

So why do we do this to ourselves?

Because starting a difficult task can feel uncomfortable.

Small tasks feel safe.



Ticking off five small things gives you a quick sense of progress.

Even if none of those five things really matters.

And planning can create another illusion.

You think about the task.

You organise the task.

You find the perfect time for the task.

But you still do not begin.

Thinking about progress is not the same as making progress.

Not even close.

There is another useful principle here: not every task has the same value.

A small number of tasks usually produce most of your meaningful results.

They are often the tasks that require concentration, courage or an uncomfortable conversation.

In other words... your frogs.

So when you avoid the frog and clean your inbox instead, you may be avoiding the very thing that would move your work or your life forward.

That is exactly what happened with my phone call.

Tell them what happened.

On day thirteen, I finally sat down, closed everything else and made the call.

And?

It took eleven minutes.

Eleven minutes... after twelve days of avoiding it.

And it was not as bad as I had imagined.

The client understood the situation.

We found a solution together.

And when the call ended, I felt lighter.

Like a weight had been lifted off your shoulders.

Exactly.

Finishing an important task can feel rewarding.

That relief makes it easier to begin the next difficult thing.

I definitely felt that after the phone call.

You wanted another frog to eat.



Which is a strange sentence if you think about it.

It really is.

But completing one meaningful task can create momentum.

The second task feels a little easier.

And repeated action can become a self-reinforcing loop.

Progress makes the next action easier, and the next action creates more progress.

Now, Julia, you do something differently from me.

Yes.

And it may be why I have avoided a few twelve-day disasters of my own.

What do you do?

Every night, before I close my laptop, I spend about ten minutes writing the next day's list.

Just ten minutes?

Just ten minutes.

I do not plan every minute of the week, and I do not build a complicated system.

I simply ask: what do I need to do tomorrow, and which task is my frog?

And you write it by hand.

Yes, in a real notebook.

Why does that matter to you?

Because when the plan is only in my head, it can remain vague.

More like a worry than a plan.

Exactly.

When I put it down on paper, it becomes specific.

Instead of vaguely thinking, I need to speak to the accountant, I write, call the accountant at nine thirty.

Now it is an action you can see and complete.

And those ten minutes at night save me a surprising amount of time the next day.

How much time?

On a busy day, I feel that they can save me close to two hours.

That is your personal estimate, of course.

Of course.

It is not a guarantee.



But it removes a great deal of hesitation from my morning.

Without a plan, you begin the day by deciding what to do.

And you keep making small decisions all day.

That can become exhausting.

It is called decision fatigue.

By writing your list the night before, you reduce those decisions.

I wake up.

I already know my frog.

And I start.

Less deliberation.

Less delay.

Ten minutes at night in exchange for a calmer morning.

That is a good trade for me.

So let us turn this into a small experiment for you.

Tonight, take five or ten minutes.

Write down what you need to do tomorrow.

Look at the list and ask yourself: which task is my frog?

Which task would make a meaningful difference if you completed it?

Then make the first action very clear.

Not just work on the report.

Open the report and write the first paragraph at nine o'clock.

Not just deal with the problem.

Call the person and ask for a ten-minute conversation.

And tomorrow morning, before small tasks fill the day... begin.

Do not stare at the frog for too long.

Once you have chosen, move quickly into the first small action.

Even if the beginning is imperfect.

Starting imperfectly beats waiting perfectly.

Every time.

Now let us collect the useful English from today's conversation.



First: to put something off.

This means to delay doing something, often because it feels difficult or unpleasant.

I keep putting that report off until tomorrow.

Next: to get something done.

This means to complete a task successfully.

I was busy all morning, but I did not get the important thing done.

Next: to tick something off.

This means to mark a task as complete on a list.

I ticked off three small tasks before breakfast.

Next: a weight off your shoulders.

We use this when a worry or responsibility disappears and we feel great relief.

Finishing that difficult call was a weight off my shoulders.

Next: decision fatigue.

This is the mental tiredness that can come from making too many decisions.

By late afternoon, decision fatigue makes every small choice feel difficult.

Next: to put something down on paper.

This means to write an idea or plan so that it becomes clear and concrete.

Stop carrying the plan in your head.

Put it down on paper.

And finally: a self-reinforcing loop.

This is a process in which one result makes the same process stronger.

Small progress can create a self-reinforcing loop: action builds confidence, and confidence supports more action.

Seven useful expressions from one real conversation.

Now, here is your sentence of the day.

Listen carefully.

We will say it twice.

Eat the most important frog first, and the rest of your day becomes easier.

Eat the most important frog first, and the rest of your day becomes easier.

Now say the first part with us.

Eat the most important frog first.



One more time.

Eat the most important frog first.

Good.

So, friends, let us bring it all together.

You have a frog.

We all do.

Tonight, write your list and name your frog for tomorrow.

Tomorrow morning, before the small tasks take over... begin.

Do not reorganise your desk first.

Do not disappear into your messages first.

Sit down and take the first clear action.

Because somewhere there is a version of you who finally made that call.

Who finally sent that email.

Who finally started that project.

And that version of you may be only eleven focused minutes away.

You can continue learning with this episode at yourenglishtoolbox.com.

The page lets you read the transcript while you listen, compare translations and adjust the audio speed to the rhythm that helps you understand without pressure.

The direct link is in the episode description.

Thank you for spending this time with us today.

Until next time, friends.

Take care of yourselves.

And go eat your frog.

Goodbye.

