

Short Stories with Peter: How Much Land Does a Man Need? — Leo Tolstoy

English learning resource · EN

Key words & expressions · English

8 learning entries

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

1

be content with

DEF

Feel satisfied with what you have, without needing more.

Content is an adjective here, with stress on the second syllable. It expresses satisfaction, not a rule against ambition. Use with before the thing you accept.

I am content with a quiet weekend at home.

She was content with her small flat.

2

set off at dawn

DEF

Begin a journey when the first daylight appears.

Set off describes departure; at dawn gives the time. Dawn is the beginning of daylight, not sunset; set stays set in the past.

We set off at dawn to avoid the heat.

They set off at dawn and reached the village before lunch.

3

run out of time

DEF

Have no time left, or approach the point when it will be too late.

Be running out of time often means some time remains but the deadline is close. Run is figurative here, not physical movement.

We are running out of time, so let us finish the meeting.

I ran out of time before I answered the last question.

4

belong to

DEF

Be owned by a particular person or group.

In the story this describes ownership, not simply location. This use usually takes a simple tense: the fields belong to him, not are belonging.

These fields belong to my family.

The blue bag belongs to someone on the train.



5

starting point

DEF

The place or moment where something begins.

In the story it is a physical place you must return to. It can also describe the beginning of a discussion, plan or learning process.

We returned to our starting point before sunset.

This question is a useful starting point for our discussion.

6

make a detour

DEF

Take a longer or different route instead of going directly.

A detour may avoid an obstacle or allow an extra visit. It need not be an accidental wrong turn; made is the past of make.

We made a detour to see the river.

The closed road forced us to make a detour.

7

out of breath

DEF

Breathing quickly or with difficulty after effort.

Common after running or climbing. Be or get out of breath describes a temporary state; it is not the same as holding your breath deliberately.

I was out of breath after climbing the stairs.

She arrived out of breath but still smiling.

8

press on

DEF

Continue with an activity or journey despite difficulty.

The particle on suggests continuing. This can show determination, but the story warns that continuing is not always wise. Use press on with something for a task.

They were tired, but they pressed on towards the hill.

We pressed on with the work despite the interruptions.

