TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 200

Explain It to Me or Explain Me? | Fix It in Five

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

43 lines

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

Julia, I do not understand this instruction.

Explain the rule to me, and I will help.

Explain me the rule?

In standard English, we normally say explain the rule to me.

Welcome to Fix It in Five from Your English Toolbox.

Today, let us fix the pattern after the verb explain.

The simple structure is explain something to someone.

First comes the thing you explain.

Then say to, followed by the person.

For example, explain the problem to your manager.

Or explain the new app to me.

We cannot usually put the person directly after explain.

So “explain me the problem” is not the standard pattern.

Compare that with give.

You can say, give me the form, or give the form to me.

But explain behaves differently.

Say, explain the answer to me.

We can also move the thing into a that-clause.

Please explain to me why the train is late.

Notice that to me comes before the long question.

Another natural sentence is, she explained to us how the system works.

Explain can also appear without naming the person.

Could you explain the schedule?

That sentence is complete because the person is understood.

You can also use this pattern in a question.

Could you explain the schedule to the new team?

And in the past tense, she explained the delay to her customers.

If the information is a question, put to me before the question clause.

Please explain to me what happened.

Do not confuse explain with tell.

You can tell me the answer, but explain the answer to me.

The verb tell commonly allows the person directly after it.

Explain normally needs to before the person.

Let us correct three sentences.

“Explain me the instructions.”

“Explain the instructions to me.”

“Can you explain us the difference?”

“Can you explain the difference to us?”

And “explain to me why it changed” is also natural.

The pattern is: explain something to someone.

Find more examples and the transcript on the episode page.

The link is in the description.

Keep learning one clear pattern at a time.