

## VOCABULARY · EPISODE 52

# 100 Essential English Phrases

Key words &amp; expressions · English + Español

10 words

Your English Toolbox

1

## to fill in the blanks

rellenar los huecos · completar lo que falta

## DEF

to supply the missing information or words in a sentence, situation, or understanding; to complete what is incomplete

*Fill in the blanks is both a literal exercise (completing gap-fill activities) and a powerful metaphor — your brain naturally fills in blanks when it hears familiar patterns, which is how listening comprehension works.*

## ES

Proporcionar la información o palabras que faltan en una oración, situación o comprensión; completar lo que está incompleto.

Es tanto un ejercicio literal como una metáfora poderosa — tu cerebro rellena los huecos cuando escucha patrones familiares.

***When you already know a phrase, your brain fills in the blanks even before you consciously process it.***

When you already know a phrase, your brain fills in the blanks even before you consciously process it. -> Cuando ya conoces una frase, tu cerebro rellena los huecos incluso antes de que la proceses conscientemente.

***The goal of learning essential phrases is to give your brain more patterns to fill in the blanks with.***

The goal of learning essential phrases is to give your brain more patterns to fill in the blanks with. -> El objetivo de aprender frases esenciales es darle a tu cerebro más patrones con los que completar lo que falta.

2

## off the top of your head

de buenas a primeras · sin pensarlo dos veces

## DEF

from immediate memory, without stopping to look things up or think at length; spontaneously

*Off the top of your head is the target state in conversation — being able to answer, respond, and express without pausing to search. It is the measure of how well something is truly integrated into your English.*

## ES

De la memoria inmediata, sin detenerse a buscar cosas o pensar mucho; espontáneamente.

Es el estado objetivo en la conversación — poder responder y expresarse sin pausar para buscar.

***If you can say a phrase off the top of your head, it is truly yours — not just studied, but owned.***

If you can say a phrase off the top of your head, it is truly yours. -> Si puedes decir una frase de buenas a primeras, es realmente tuya.

***He couldn't name three phrasal verbs off the top of his head, which told him exactly what to work on next.***

He couldn't name three phrasal verbs off the top of his head, which told him exactly what to work on next. -> No pudo nombrar tres verbos frasales sin pensarlo dos veces, lo que le indicó exactamente en qué trabajar a continuación.

3

## to think on your feet

**pensar sobre la marcha · responder rápidamente sin preparación**

### DEF

to respond quickly and effectively to situations or questions without preparation

*Think on your feet is the phrase for real-time processing in language. It captures the skill most learners want and fear: not the prepared speech, but the spontaneous conversation. Developing this skill requires deliberately placing yourself in situations where you cannot prepare.*

### ES

Responder rápida y efectivamente a situaciones o preguntas sin preparación.

La frase para el procesamiento en tiempo real en el lenguaje. Captura la habilidad que la mayoría de los estudiantes quieren y temen.

***The best way to learn to think on your feet in English is to have unrehearsed conversations.***

The best way to learn to think on your feet in English is to have unrehearsed conversations. -> La mejor manera de aprender a pensar sobre la marcha en inglés es tener conversaciones sin ensayar.

***She had rehearsed for her presentation but was caught off guard by the questions — she needed to think on her feet.***

She had rehearsed for her presentation but was caught off guard by the questions — she needed to think on her feet. -> Había ensayado para su presentación pero la tomaron por sorpresa las preguntas — necesitaba responder rápidamente sin preparación.

4

## to grope for words

**buscar las palabras · buscar mentalmente la palabra adecuada sin encontrarla de inmediato**

### DEF

to struggle to find the right word in the moment, searching mentally without immediately finding it

*Grope for words is the honest phrase for the gap that learners feel — you have the meaning, you know what you want to say, but the English word will not come. This is normal, especially in a second language. Naming it reduces panic and helps you develop bridging strategies.*

### ES

Luchar por encontrar la palabra correcta en el momento, buscando mentalmente sin encontrarla de inmediato.

La frase honesta para la brecha que sienten los estudiantes — tienes el significado pero la palabra inglesa no llega.

***Everyone gropes for words sometimes — the skill is learning how to bridge the gap while you search.***

Everyone gropes for words sometimes — the skill is learning how to bridge the gap while you search. -> Todo el mundo busca las palabras a veces — la habilidad es aprender cómo cerrar la brecha mientras buscas.

***She sometimes groped for words in complex discussions, but she had learned to paraphrase rather than go silent.***

She sometimes groped for words in complex discussions, but she had learned to paraphrase rather than go silent. -> A veces buscaba mentalmente la palabra adecuada en discusiones complejas, pero había aprendido a parafrasear en lugar de quedarse en silencio.

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## to paraphrase

parafrasear · expresar el mismo significado con palabras diferentes

DEF

to express the same meaning using different words — especially when you do not know or cannot recall the exact term

*Paraphrase is one of the most powerful fluency tools. Instead of stopping when you cannot find a word, you describe it. 'The thing you use to open a wine bottle' is a perfectly acceptable paraphrase for 'corkscrew'. Native speakers paraphrase constantly — it is not a sign of weakness.*

ES

Expresar el mismo significado usando palabras diferentes — especialmente cuando no conoces o no puedes recordar el término exacto.

Una de las herramientas de fluidez más poderosas. En lugar de parar cuando no encuentras una palabra, la describes.

**When you cannot remember a word, paraphrase it — describe the thing until the word comes or the listener helps.**

When you cannot remember a word, paraphrase it — describe the thing until the word comes or the listener helps. -> Cuando no puedes recordar una palabra, parafraseala — describe la cosa hasta que llegue la palabra o el oyente ayude.

**She paraphrased brilliantly: 'It is the feeling when you are embarrassed for someone else' for the word she could not recall.**

She paraphrased brilliantly: 'It is the feeling when you are embarrassed for someone else' for the word she could not recall. -> Parafraseó brillantemente: 'Es el sentimiento cuando estás avergonzado por otra persona' para la palabra que no podía recordar.

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## fluency

la fluidez · la capacidad de hablar un idioma con soltura y continuidad

DEF

the ability to speak or write a language smoothly and confidently, with natural speed and without excessive pausing

*Fluency is often misunderstood as perfection — it is not. A fluent speaker makes errors. Fluency means flow: the ability to keep going, to communicate without constant breakdown, to express yourself in real time. Fluency and accuracy are different skills, and fluency often improves when you stop focusing on accuracy.*

ES

La capacidad de hablar o escribir un idioma con soltura y confianza, con velocidad natural y sin pausas excesivas.

A menudo malentendida como perfección — no lo es. Un hablante fluido comete errores. Fluidez significa flujo.

**Fluency is not speaking perfectly — it is speaking smoothly enough that the conversation keeps moving.**

Fluency is not speaking perfectly — it is speaking smoothly enough that the conversation keeps moving. -> La fluidez no es hablar perfectamente — es hablar con suficiente soltura para que la conversación siga fluyendo.

**She achieved fluency not by eliminating errors, but by developing the confidence to speak past them.**

She achieved fluency not by eliminating errors, but by developing the confidence to speak past them. -> Alcanzó la fluidez no eliminando errores, sino desarrollando la confianza para hablar a pesar de ellos.

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## filler words

### muletillas · palabras de relleno para llenar silencios mientras se piensa

#### DEF

sounds or short expressions used to fill pauses while thinking, such as 'um', 'er', 'well', 'you know', 'kind of', or 'like'

*Filler words are not errors — they are how all speakers, including native speakers, manage thinking time. The problem is overuse, which makes speech sound hesitant. Learning which fillers sound natural in English, and which are overused, is a real fluency skill.*

#### ES

Sonidos o expresiones cortas usadas para llenar pausas mientras se piensa, como 'um', 'er', 'well', 'you know', 'kind of', o 'like'.

Las muletillas no son errores — son cómo todos los hablantes gestionan el tiempo de pensamiento. El problema es el uso excesivo.

**Replace silence with filler words when you need thinking time — 'well', 'let me think', or 'that is a good question'.**

Replace silence with filler words when you need thinking time — 'well', 'let me think', or 'that is a good question'. -> Reemplaza el silencio con muletillas cuando necesites tiempo para pensar — 'well', 'let me think', o 'that is a good question'.

**She reduced her use of filler words not by eliminating them but by choosing more natural English ones.**

She reduced her use of filler words not by eliminating them but by choosing more natural English ones. -> Redujo su uso de muletillas no eliminándolas sino eligiendo las más naturales en inglés.

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## to keep the conversation going

### mantener la conversación · continuar un diálogo más allá de un simple intercambio

#### DEF

to maintain a dialogue beyond a simple exchange — to ask follow-up questions, add information, or respond in a way that invites a reply

*Keep the conversation going is a social fluency skill, not just a linguistic one. Many learners can answer questions but cannot keep the conversation alive. The techniques — asking follow-ups, echoing words, adding personal connections — can be learned and practised deliberately.*

#### ES

Mantener un diálogo más allá de un simple intercambio — hacer preguntas de seguimiento, añadir información o responder de una manera que invite a una respuesta.

Una habilidad de fluidez social, no solo lingüística. Muchos estudiantes pueden responder preguntas pero no pueden mantener la conversación viva.

**Keeping a conversation going in English is a skill — ask follow-up questions and offer your own perspective.**

Keeping a conversation going in English is a skill — ask follow-up questions and offer your own perspective. -> Mantener la conversación en inglés es una habilidad — haz preguntas de seguimiento y ofrece tu propia perspectiva.

**She used to give short answers and let conversations die, but she practised keeping them going for at least five minutes.**

She used to give short answers and let conversations die, but she practised keeping them going for at least five minutes. -> Solía dar respuestas cortas y dejar que las conversaciones murieran, pero practicó manteniendo la conversación durante al menos cinco minutos.

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## to hesitate

dudar · hacer una pausa antes de hablar por incertidumbre

### DEF

to pause before speaking or acting, often because of uncertainty, self-doubt, or the need to think

*Hesitate is the verb for the pause before speaking. In a second language, hesitation is almost universal — it is not a sign of low ability but of careful thinking. The goal is not to stop hesitating entirely but to hesitate less often and recover from it more smoothly.*

### ES

Hacer una pausa antes de hablar o actuar, a menudo por incertidumbre, duda de uno mismo o la necesidad de pensar.

El verbo para la pausa antes de hablar. En un segundo idioma, la duda es casi universal — no es una señal de baja capacidad.

***It is normal to hesitate in a second language — the goal is to hesitate less as confidence grows.***

It is normal to hesitate in a second language — the goal is to hesitate less as confidence grows. -> Es normal dudar en un segundo idioma — el objetivo es dudar menos a medida que crece la confianza.

***She used to hesitate for so long before answering that conversations became awkward, but she learned to speak immediately.***

She used to hesitate for so long before answering that conversations became awkward, but she learned to speak immediately. -> Solía dudar tanto tiempo antes de responder que las conversaciones se volvían incómodas, pero aprendió a hablar de inmediato.

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## a speaking partner

un compañero de conversación · una persona con quien practicar el habla regularmente

### DEF

a person you practise speaking with regularly — ideally a native or advanced speaker who can give feedback

*Speaking partner is the informal term for a conversation practice companion. For many learners, having a regular speaking partner is the difference between stagnation and breakthrough. The speaking partner creates accountability, regular speaking time, and a safe space for errors.*

### ES

Una persona con quien practicas hablar regularmente — idealmente un hablante nativo o avanzado que pueda dar retroalimentación.

El término informal para un compañero de práctica conversacional. Tener un compañero regular puede ser la diferencia entre estancamiento y avance.

***Find a speaking partner for English — even one thirty-minute session a week will accelerate your progress.***

Find a speaking partner for English — even one thirty-minute session a week will accelerate your progress. -> Encuentra un compañero de conversación para el inglés — incluso una sesión de treinta minutos a la semana acelerará tu progreso.

***Her speaking partner gave her honest feedback on her errors, which no textbook had ever done.***

Her speaking partner gave her honest feedback on her errors, which no textbook had ever done. -> Su compañero de conversación le dio retroalimentación honesta sobre sus errores, algo que ningún libro de texto había hecho jamás.