



## LESSON 1

# talking like an American

Since the very beginning of the *To The Top* series, you have read the *Fixed Expressions* section in your Textbook. This section has shown you just how many expressions you have learned that will help you meet your goal of talking and writing like an American. After all, that's why you're learning English, isn't it?

Remember that these expressions are one of the keys to sounding like an American. Even if you speak or write in a way that is grammatically correct, your English will sound "wrong" to native speakers if you do not use the appropriate expression.

As you are now in the *Advanced Stage* of *To The Top*, you are ready to learn about different ways we can define these expressions. Besides the term *Fixed Expressions*, we can use the terms *Collocations* and *Idioms* (or *Idiomatic Expressions*). Here is a summary:

*Fixed Expressions* are commonly used to express concepts or ideas in certain situations. You know many useful ones, such as **Nice to meet you**, **How are you?** (greeting), **Excuse me** and **Sorry about that** (apologizing).

*Collocations* are groups of two or more words that usually go together. Some examples of common collocations are:

Adjective + noun (fast car, quick peek, rude/quick/correct reply)

Verb + noun (do homework, miss the bus, cut off an allowance)  
(note that *phrasal verbs* are also *collocations*)

Noun + noun (travel plan, milk chocolate)

Adverb + adjective (extremely busy, completely different)

Verb + adverb / adverb + verb (sit down / greatly appreciate)

*Idioms* are word groups that have a special meaning that's different from what each separate word means; for example, **in the same boat**, **on cloud nine**, **be in someone's shoes**, **be late for one's own funeral**, **don't hold your breath**, **take it easy**, and **Is the sky blue?**

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There are no rules about collocations, fixed expressions, and idioms; they just sound right to native speakers of English. For example, we say, “Let’s have some **fast food** for lunch,” (not *quick* food), “**How old are you?**” (not How many years do you have?), and “**Better late than never**” (not Before late than never).

Because there are so many benefits of using collocations, fixed expressions, and idioms, you should always pay attention to new ones you might read or hear in conversations, movies, videos, etc.

- When you use collocations, fixed expressions, and idioms, you can usually use fewer words to communicate and make fewer mistakes. Instead of saying you have the correct amount of money to pay for something, just say you have *the exact change*. Instead of telling a restaurant attendant you want to take your food with you and eat it later, just say you want it *to go*. Instead of saying you have official permission to drive a car, just say you have a *driver’s license*.
- If you are writing or speaking about a particular subject, using common *collocations*, *fixed expressions*, and *idioms* will make your English sound more natural, and you will be able to communicate more effectively.

For your information, common collocations are usually found in the example sentences of dictionary entries. There are also many specialized collocation dictionaries.

Remember that the situations and exercises in *To The Top* are designed to help you speak English in a natural way and will help you meet your goal of true fluency. At the end of certain lessons, we will list the expressions you learned in the situations.



Here are some you learned in Lesson 1.

I couldn't care less. ("Did you hear, Noah? It's going to snow next week!" "I couldn't care less. I'll be on vacation in the Bahamas by then.")

Take it easy. ("I'm late for work, and I can't find my keys!" "Take it easy. I'll drive you to work, and we'll find your keys later.")

To freak out ("Why is Alexa freaking out?" "She just found out she has to give a speech at work today, and she's really nervous.")

To make up for ("I'm sorry I got so angry at you. Let me take you out to lunch to make up for it." "That would be very nice.")



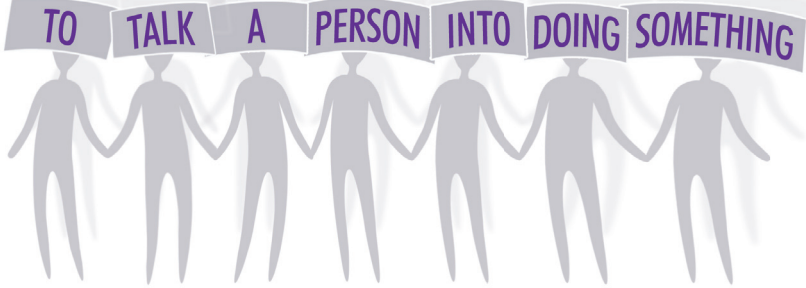
Complete the blank with a word that *collocates* (sounds natural to native speakers) with the word *choice*, then show it to your teacher.

Life is all about making choices. We always hope that we are making the r\_\_\_\_\_t choice. You already know that deciding to learn English with us was definitely the right decision!



## LESSON 6

# talking like an American



Remember that the situations and exercises in *To The Top* feature expressions that are designed to help you speak English in a natural way and will help you meet your goal of true fluency. At the end of certain lessons, we will list the fixed expressions, collocations, and idioms you learned in the situations. Here are some you learned in Lesson 6.

to go to a person's head ("Why has Leonard been so conceited lately?" "He won some competition at work, and it really went to his head.")

Yours truly ("Who is Lilly going to the prom with?" "With the coolest, most handsome guy around—yours truly.")

that much ("Would you like some tomato juice?" "Just a little. I don't like tomatoes that much.")

to talk a person into doing something ("I thought you said you'd never go surfing!" "I know, but my new girlfriend loves to surf, and she talked me into giving it a try.")

to (not) be into something ("Honey, look at this 7-night Caribbean cruise!" "Hm, it looks nice, but I'm not really into cruises. I prefer to go camping in the mountains.")

to do a person's own thing ("Are you going to get a tour guide\* for your trip to Rome?" "No, when I'm traveling, I prefer to do my own thing and make friends with the local people.")

\* A tour guide is a person who conducts tourists around a town, through a museum or other points of interest, or takes them sightseeing.