

Dialogue 1

Listen and read after the audio.

JANE: Hi Anne, it's Jane.

A N N E : Hello, it's been **ages** since I last heard from you. How are you?

JANE: Not too well, actually. I've had the flu for about a month. I **take after** my mum;
she's always ill.

A N N E : **Hadn't you better** call the doctor?

JANE: I'm rather **reluctant** to do that, and anyway there's **no point**. He can't help me.

A N N E : Yes, but you **may as well** see him. You could go on your day off.

JANE: I suppose so. I don't think I could **cope with** another month like the last one. I think you are much **better at** handling illness than I am... Anyway, what's been going on in your life?

A N N E : I've just found a new flat. Actually, it's in a very **posh** street.

JANE: **Show off!** I bet it's lovely.

A N N E : Well, you know how choosy I am and I'm much **better off** than I was a few years ago so I can afford to live in such an area. You'll have to come round when I've got the place **done up**.

JANE: I'd love to. Incidentally, did your cat **turn up**? I asked round everyone at work but no-one had seen it.

A N N E : Oh yes. He soon came back. He missed being made a **fuss** of and was fed up having to survive on stale food.

JANE: What a **turn-up** for the books! I thought he was gone forever.... I'm just going to turn down the television. Hold on a second!

A N N E : OK.

Ages (A very long time)

Examples:

- I meet your brother quite a bit these days but I haven't seen your sister in/for* ages.

- It seems ages since I was last here.

* In would only be used after a negative or superlative construction, e.g. It's the best film I've seen in ages.

But not in the future, i.e. we would not say: We won't arrive in ages.

Well Off (Rich)

Examples:

- He is so well off, he doesn't know what to spend his money on.

- If I were as well off as she is, I'd retire.

Well off does not necessarily have to refer to money: it can also be used in respect of opportunities, facilities, etc.,

e.g. Young people today don't know how well off they are.

i.e. children nowadays do not appreciate the opportunities which are open to them and which were not available to their parents.

Better off is the comparative form of Well off. i.e. richer,

e.g. He is far better off than I am.

However it can also be used to mean *"It would be/it is better for you, him, it, etc."*,

e.g. I. You'd be better off going on the motorway than taking a country route, if you want to arrive there by 6 o'clock.

2. She's better off without her husband; he made her life a misery.

Note that this meaning of **Better off** is still used in the comparative sense. This construction should not be confused with Had better which is a slightly stronger form of should,

e.g. I'd better go now; I've got quite a few things to do.

The opposite of Better off is **Worse off**, i.e. poorer.

e.g. Even though my brother has been working for quite a number of years, he is worse off than me.

May/Might as well

i. *(One should do something only because there is nothing better to do)*

Examples:

- We may as well go to John's place again, unless you can think of something more interesting to do.

- A: Shall we go off to work now?:

B: I suppose we might as well.

Might as well and May as well are interchangeable, but it is very important to understand the difference between May/Might as well and May/Might. The difference between We may/might go to the pub and We may/might as well go to the pub is that the first sentence expresses a possibility - Maybe we won't go, whilst the second sentence expresses a suggestion to go to the pub, but only because there is nothing better to do. This meaning of May as well, therefore, has a negative feel about it.

ii. *(There is no harm in/it's worthwhile doing something)*

Examples:

- A: Do you think I should take a pullover with me to Greece?

B: Well you probably won't need it but you might as well take it just in case.

- Even though I've got quite a number of dictionaries at home, I might as well buy this one as it's so cheap.

i.e. You will lose nothing so therefore it's worth doing.

iii. ***(It would be the same/it wouldn't make any difference, so therefore one should do the easier or cheaper thing)***

Examples:

- As the weather is so hot and sunny this year, I've gone off the idea of going abroad; I may as well stay in England.
- The office party was so boring, I might as well have remained* at home.

This form of Might as well is generally used where one has a choice of two or more things which are of similar quality and, because of this, one should choose the most convenient one.

* Note that the past of I might/may as well is I may/might as well have [+ past participle].

To do up

i. ***(To tie up, button up, fasten, e.g. zip)***

Examples:

- I don't want to make a fuss, but you'd better do your shirt up before meeting the boss.
- A: Do you want me to give you a hand in doing up your dress?
B: Yes, you may as well.

The opposite of To do up is To **undo**.

e.g. 1. Would you mind if I undid my jacket?

2. Your shoelaces are undone!

ii. ***(To decorate, renovate)***

Examples:

- If we don't go away this summer, we might as well do the house up.
- It's been ages since we last had our house done up.