

89 Vague language

We generally use **vague** language in spoken English when we aren't able to be precise, or don't want or need to be.

How long will you be away?

~ Three weeks **or so**.

He earns **loads of** money, doesn't he?

~ Probably, somewhere **in the region of** £100,000.

He's **something to do with** TV, isn't he?

~ Yes, **something like that**.

She doesn't look well. Is she ill **or something**?

~ I don't know. I am **sort of** worried about her.

We'll buy that car **somehow or other**.

~ Well, I've got £1000, **give or take** a bit.

I've got loads of **stuff** to prepare. How many are coming?

~ Oh, fifty **odd**, I think.

SPOTLIGHT *something like that, etc.*

We can use can use these phrases when we are being vague.

- She's a doctor **or something like that**.
- He works in publishing I think. ~ Yeah, **something along those lines**.
- He said they advise importers. **Something of that sort**.

GLOSSARY

vague	not clear or detailed
or so	You add or so after a number, quantity, etc. to show that it is approximate. SYN or thereabouts
loads (of sth) inf	a large quantity of sth SYN tons/piles (of sth) inf
in the region of	used when you are giving a number, price etc. to show that it is not exact: <i>He paid somewhere in the region of £500.</i> SYN approximately
something to do with sth	in some way connected with sth
or something inf	used when you are not exactly sure about a thing, person or place ALSO or somebody/ somewhere ; SYN something/ somebody/ somewhere or other
sort of inf	to some extent, but in a way that is hard to explain SYN kind of
somehow	in some way or by some means, although you don't know exactly how: somehow or other
give or take sth	used for talking about numbers which are not exact: <i>We'll have 100 guests, give or take ten.</i>
stuff inf	used to refer in a general way to things people say, do, or think, etc: <i>They played some great stuff. I don't believe all that stuff.</i>
odd (after a number) inf	approximately or a little more than the number mentioned: 30 odd students

1 Replace the underlined word(s) with a word or phrase that keeps the same meaning.

- We've got loads of food.
- It cost £200 or so.
- I am sort of glad she went.
- She's an optician or something like that.
- I think he's 50 or just over.
- It's in the region of 400 miles.
- I'll get there by some means.
- He was not clear about how to get there.
- I'll give the book to Susana or one of the other girls.

2 One word is missing in each sentence. What is it, and where does it go?

- She was just sort pretending to be ill; I don't think she actually was.
- We seem to have of rice, so I might make a paella.
- He's a chief executive something; I'm not too sure.
- We'll leave at seven, give take a few minutes, so don't be late.
- I've got a meeting tonight but I'll finish my essay by tomorrow or other.
- The whole trip cost somewhere the region of £400.

3 Rewrite the sentences using the word in capitals to make each sentence more vague.

- We invited a hundred to the wedding. SO
- He looks depressed. SORT
- Her job is in marketing. DO
- There were a lot of good groups and comedians at the festival. STUFF
- It's 300 miles. REGION
- We could go to France. SOMEWHERE
- I've got £500. GIVE
- We could get him a book for his birthday. SOMETHING

4 ABOUT YOUR LANGUAGE Translate the dialogues at the top of the page. Do you have similar phrases in your language?

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TEST YOURSELF