

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 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: <i>30 odd students</i>

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

- 1 We've got loads of food.
- 2 It cost £200 or so.
- 3 I am sort of glad she went.
- 4 She's an optician or something like that.
- 5 I think he's 50 or just over.
- 6 It's in the region of 400 miles.
- 7 I'll get there by some means.
- 8 He was not clear about how to get there.
- 9 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?

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

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

- 1 We invited a hundred to the wedding. **SO**
- 2 He looks depressed. **SORT**
- 3 Her job is in marketing. **DO**
- 4 There were a lot of good groups and comedians at the festival. **STUFF**
- 5 It's 300 miles. **REGION**
- 6 We could go to France. **SOMEWHERE**
- 7 I've got £500. **GIVE**
- 8 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?

