

A

Common responses

A large number of fixed phrases are used as common responses in everyday conversation.

A: What time did he get here?

B: **I've no idea.** [I don't know]

A: Are you going tonight?

B: **That depends.** [used to say you are not sure because other things affect your answer; also **It depends**]

A: Shall we go out tonight?

B: Yeah, **why not** [OK]?

A: Did you like the film?

B: **Not really.** [used to say *no* but not strongly]

A: I'm going to Sweden next week.

B: Really. **What for?** [why?]

A: Can I borrow your car?

B: **No way.** [that's impossible; *informal*; *syn* **no chance**]

A: They're coming tonight, aren't they?

B: **I suppose so.** [used to say yes but not strongly]

A: Jason has grown a beard.

B: I know. **I couldn't believe my eyes!** [I was very surprised when I saw it]

A: We have to work tonight.

B: **You must be joking.**

A: Eli got top marks.

B: **I don't believe it!** [used to express great surprise]

Language help

We can use **you must be joking** (*syns* **you're joking/kidding**) when someone has just said something that is a surprise. It may be an unpleasant surprise (as above), or a nice surprise, e.g.

A: *My father said he would pay for all of us to go on holiday.*

B: **You're kidding.** *Fantastic!*

B

In conversation

Notice how fixed phrases can form an important part of an everyday conversation.

A: I had to **have a word with** Vince and Milan today. [speak to them without others listening]

B: Oh yeah? Are they causing trouble again?

A: Well, **you know**, [used to fill a pause in conversation] they just keep talking to each other, and they don't **pay attention** [listen] – **that sort of thing**.

B: Why don't you make them sit in different places?

A: I tried that, but they still talked to each other.

B: Well, **in that case** [because of the situation described], you'll have to move one of them.

A: Maybe, but I'd **feel bad about** that [be unhappy about]. They're quite nice boys, you know, they just **can't help it** [can't control some actions or behaviour].

B: Sure ... but you can't let **that kind of thing** continue.

A: No, you're right. But I've given them a final warning today, so let's **wait and see** what happens. [wait to discover what will happen]

B: OK. But **what if** they don't improve? [what will you do if they don't improve?]

A: I think it'll be OK.

B: Well, if you **change your mind** [change your decision], come and see me again, and I'll arrange for one of them to be moved to another class.



Language help

We use **sort/kind** in several common phrases in informal speech. **(and) that sort/kind of thing** [examples of that type]

e.g. *I grow onions and carrots – that sort/kind of thing.*

sort/kind of [approximately/more or less] e.g. *Her new top is sort of blue; I thought he was kind of strange.*

Exercises

76.1 Put the responses in the most suitable column below.

~~no way~~ not really I suppose so why not
you're kidding that depends I don't believe it

positive	negative	not sure or either
	<i>no way</i>	

76.2 Choose the correct word. Sometimes both are correct.

- I need to have a word / *speaking* with Catalina.
- I don't know what they plan to do; we'll have to wait and *see* / *watch*.
- He usually wears jeans, trainers, and that *sort* / *kind* of thing.
- Little children shout and scream all the time; they can't *help* / *leave* it.
- A: I went to Cambridge last week. B: Really? *What* / *Why* for?
- The trouble with Mark is that he doesn't *pay* / *give* attention.
- A: Are you working tonight? B: *It* / *That* depends.

76.3 Complete the dialogues with a suitable fixed phrase.

- A: Did you hear that Daniel's getting married?
B: Yeah. *I don't believe it!*
- A: Sofia doesn't listen.
B: No. She never
- A: Did you speak to Nathalie?
B: Yes, I
- A: Dad wasn't happy about forgetting my birthday.
B: No, he felt
- A: Do you know what time he'll be here?
B: No, I'm afraid I've
- A: Are you still planning to sell the flat?
B: No, I've I'm going to keep it now.

76.4 Where could you add the phrases in the box to the dialogues below?

~~you know~~ I couldn't believe my eyes kind of in that case
that sort of thing you must be joking why not

- A: What did you say to him?
B: Well, *you know* it was quite difficult.
- A: What colour was it?
B: Blue.
- A: He's not coming this evening, so you won't be able to ask him.
B: Well, I'll phone him and ask him.
- A: Jerry says we'll have to walk all the way to the campsite.
B: That's ten miles!
- A: Do you want to get a takeaway?
B: Yeah.
- A: What do they sell?
B: Oh, burgers, pizzas, ...
- A: Did you see Chloe wearing those high-heeled shoes?
B: Yes.