

Business English with Pretty Woman

Vocabulary Breakdown

Hollywood English Club

Edward Lewis is a corporate raider who buys companies and sells off their parts for profit. Vivian Ward is a woman who understands people better than he does. This lesson extracts the sharp business vocabulary and the human language underneath it.

1. "Destiny"

■ Destiny is the idea that events are predetermined — that a person's future is fixed by forces beyond their control.

✓ Often used romantically or philosophically. Edward uses it slightly sarcastically when Vivian says meeting him was destiny.

▶ *"She believed it was destiny that brought her to that city, on that day, to meet that person."*

2. "Intentions"

■ Intentions are what you plan or mean to do. Honourable intentions means your motives are genuine and respectful.

✓ Often used when people question the motives behind an action. "What are your intentions?" means what do you actually want?

▶ *"He made his intentions clear from the beginning — he wanted a long-term partnership, not a quick deal."*

3. "Delicacy"

■ A delicacy is a rare or expensive food considered special in a particular culture.

✓ Also means the quality of being careful and sensitive in a difficult situation. In the restaurant scene, it refers to fancy food.

▶ *"Sea urchin is considered a delicacy in Japan but takes some getting used to."*

4. "Bon Appetit"

■ Bon appetit is a French phrase meaning enjoy your meal.

✓ Completely absorbed into English. Used in restaurants, at dinner tables, or humorously before eating anything.

▶ *"She set the plates down with a smile and said: bon appetit."*

5. "Break It Up and Sell Off the Pieces"

■ To break a company up and sell off the pieces means to acquire a business, divide it into parts, and sell each part individually for profit.

✓ This is the core of what Edward does as a corporate raider. Often controversial because it can result in layoffs and the destruction of a functioning business.

▶ *"The investment firm bought the struggling chain and immediately began to break it up and sell off the pieces."*

6. "Thrilled"

■ Thrilled means extremely happy and excited.

✓ A strong positive emotion. More intense than happy or pleased. Can also be used sarcastically.

▶ *"She was thrilled when her pitch was selected from over two hundred submissions."*

7. "Garage Sale"

■ A garage sale is when someone sells unwanted household items from their home, usually at very low prices.

✓ Vivian uses it as a metaphor — Edward breaks up businesses and sells the pieces like junk at a garage sale.

▶ *"After the divorce, he held a garage sale and got rid of everything that reminded him of the old life."*

8. "Stock vs Share"

■ Stock refers to ownership in a company in general. A share is one unit of that ownership.

✓ Often used interchangeably in informal speech, but technically different. You hold stock; you buy shares.

▶ *"She bought shares in the company before the product launched and watched her stock value triple."*

9. "Suckers"

■ A sucker is someone who is easily fooled or taken advantage of.

✓ Informal and slightly contemptuous. In the business context, suckers are the naive investors or employees left behind when a company is stripped.

▶ *"There's a sucker born every minute, his mentor warned him — and the market will find them all."*

10. "Bastard"

■ In its informal sense, bastard is a strong insult used to describe someone seen as cruel, dishonest, or unscrupulous.

✓ Originally meant a person born outside of marriage. Now used as a general insult or, sometimes affectionately, between close friends.

▶ *"He was charming on the surface, but everyone in the industry knew he was a cold-blooded bastard."*

11. "Franchise (Figurative)"

■ Figuratively, a franchise refers to something that has expanded into a reliable, repeatable, and profitable system.

✓ The literal meaning is a licensed business model. Used figuratively to describe anything that has become a consistent brand or operation.

▶ *"The detective series became such a franchise that there were spin-offs, books, and merchandise."*

12. "Passed Away"

■ To pass away is a gentle, respectful way of saying someone has died.

✓ A euphemism. Used to soften the reality of death in polite conversation. More formal than "died," less clinical than "deceased."

▶ *"His father passed away last year, and he has been running the family business alone ever since."*

13. "Destroyers"

■ In a business context, destroyers are those who break down existing companies rather than build new ones.

✓ Morse uses it to accuse Edward directly — calling him and people like him destroyers who profit from dismantling what others built.

▶ *"History remembers the builders, not the destroyers," the old man said quietly."*

14. "Appropriations Committee"

■ An appropriations committee is a government body that controls the allocation of public funds.

✓ Mentioned to show that Morse's shipbuilding company has government contracts — making Edward's takeover attempt politically sensitive.

▶ *"The contract had to be approved by the appropriations committee before any work could begin."*

15. "In Your Pocket"

■ "In your pocket" means under your control or influence — usually implying corruption or undue influence.

✓ To have someone in your pocket means they will do what you want, often because you have paid or pressured them.

▶ *"Everyone knew the council had the developer in their pocket — every planning application sailed through."*

16. "Literal vs Figurative"

■ Literal means the exact, original meaning of words. Figurative means words used symbolically or metaphorically.

✓ Essential for understanding English idioms. When Edward talks about tearing something apart, he means it figuratively — emotionally, not physically.

▶ *"She said the meeting was a train wreck — not literally, of course. It was figuratively disastrous."*

17. "I Look Forward to It"

■ "I look forward to it" is a polite, formal way of expressing anticipation for a future event or meeting.

✓ Common in business emails and professional conversations. Signals genuine or polite enthusiasm for what is coming.

▶ *"Thank you for the invitation. I look forward to it."*

18. Idiom Spotlight: "Plays Hardball"

■ To play hardball means to act in a tough, uncompromising way — refusing to give ground in a negotiation or conflict.

✓ From baseball: hardball is the real game as opposed to the softer version. In business, playing hardball means using pressure, leverage, and aggression.

▶ *"When the other side refused to move, she decided to play hardball and threatened to walk away entirely."*

Pretty Woman: Play Hardball

Student Worksheet

Part 1: Vocabulary Match

Match each word or phrase with its correct definition. Write the letter on the line.

WORDS / PHRASES	DEFINITIONS
_____ 1. play hardball	a) A polite, indirect way of saying someone has died
_____ 2. high-stakes	b) A situation where a lot is at risk — money, reputation, or power
_____ 3. delicacy	c) Someone's plans, goals, or reasons for doing something
_____ 4. intentions	d) To be aggressive and uncompromising to get what you want
_____ 5. passed away	e) A rare or expensive food, often considered special
_____ 6. in your pocket	f) To completely defeat or destroy someone in a competition or argument
_____ 7. tear you apart	g) Controlling someone, often through bribes or corrupt influence

Part 2: Fill in the Blanks

Complete each sentence with a word or phrase from the word bank.

WORD BANK

play hardball • garage sale • calm down • destiny • not thrilled • get some air • look forward to it

1. I'm _____ about working overtime again this weekend.
2. Some people believe in _____ — that everything happens for a reason.
3. If you want a pay rise, you might need to _____ during your performance review.
4. She stepped outside to _____ after the heated argument.
5. We sold our old furniture at a _____ last Saturday.
6. " _____, everyone. There's no need to panic."

7. "A rematch? Against you? I _____!"

Part 3: Saying It Softly — Euphemisms

A **euphemism** is a polite or indirect way of saying something unpleasant. This lesson introduced many euphemisms for death.

Sort each phrase into the correct column in the table below.

PHRASE POOL

kicked the bucket • she departed this life • he's pushing up daisies • she entered eternal rest • he bit the dust • she is no longer with us • she cashed in her chips • he went to be with the Lord

FORMAL / RESPECTFUL	HUMOROUS / INFORMAL (use with care!)
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Part 4: Literal or Figurative?

Literal = exactly what the words say. **Figurative** = a deeper, non-literal meaning.

Read each sentence. Write L (Literal) or F (Figurative) on the line, then explain what the sentence really means.

8. "I'm going to tear you apart in this debate."

L or F? _____

What does it mean? _____

9. "She has politicians in her pocket."

L or F? _____

What does it mean? _____

10. "The cat tore the newspaper apart with its claws."

L or F? _____

What does it mean? _____

11. "He's got the referee in his pocket — look at these decisions."

L or F? _____

What does it mean? _____

12. "The dog tore the cushion apart while we were out."

L or F? _____

What does it mean? _____

13. "That breakup really tore him apart."

L or F? _____

What does it mean? _____

Part 5: Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer.

14. What does "play hardball" mean?

- a) To play a game of baseball with a real ball.
- b) To be tough, aggressive, and unwilling to compromise.
- c) To refuse to take any risks at all.
- d) To be overly friendly in negotiations.

15. What is the difference between "stock" and "shares"?

- e) They mean exactly the same thing.
- f) "Stock" refers to ownership in a company overall; a "share" is one individual unit of that ownership.
- g) "Shares" refer to the whole company; "stock" is one unit.
- h) "Stock" is used in America; "shares" is only used in the UK.

16. In the scene, Edward says he has the "franchise" on being terrible. What does he mean?

- i) He owns a chain of businesses.
- j) He is sarcastically claiming he is worse than his father — as if he holds exclusive rights to being a terrible person.
- k) He is angry about a business deal falling apart.
- l) He wants to open a new restaurant franchise.

17. When Edward says "I look forward to it" after being threatened, what does this show about his character?

- m) He is scared but hiding it.
- n) He is being polite out of habit.
- o) He is genuinely excited by the challenge and confident he will win.
- p) He wants to end the conversation quickly.

18. Why is "kicked the bucket" not appropriate to say at a funeral?

- q) Because it is a French phrase.

- r) Because it is a humorous, informal expression that would sound disrespectful in a serious setting.
- s) Because it is too formal.
- t) Because it is only used in American English.

Part 6: True or False?

Write T (True) or F (False). If the statement is false, correct it on the line below.

19. The phrase "play hardball" comes from the sport of basketball.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

20. In France and Italy, salad is often served after the main course.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

21. "Passed away" is an example of a euphemism.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

22. If a politician is "in your pocket," it means they owe you money.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

23. A garage sale is held in a shop or supermarket.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

24. "Break it up and sell off the pieces" refers to selling a company in separate parts rather than as a whole.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

Part 7: Scene Analysis

Answer in complete sentences.

25. Mr. Morse warns Edward: "Watch out, Lewis. I'm gonna tear you apart." Edward replies: "I look forward to it." What does this exchange tell us about both characters?

26. Edward uses the word "franchise" in an unusual, figurative way. Why is this an effective piece of dialogue? What does it tell us about his relationship with his father?

27. The lesson explains that "play hardball" comes from baseball. Can you think of another sport where a similar phrase might have come from? (For example: "step up to the plate," "move the goalposts.") What sport do you think English borrows the most from, and why?

Part 8: Creative Writing Challenge

You are about to negotiate something important — it could be a pay rise, a business deal, a better price on a car, or anything you choose. Write a short dialogue (6–8 lines) showing you playing hardball. Use at least **FOUR** vocabulary words or phrases from this lesson.

Which words/phrases did you use? List them here:

Bonus: Discussion Questions

Think about these and be ready to share your ideas!

- Have you ever had to play hardball — in a job interview, a negotiation, or an argument? What happened?
- The scene shows Edward "breaking up" companies and selling the pieces for profit. Do you think this is good or bad for employees? For society?

- English has many euphemisms for death. Why do you think people avoid saying "died" directly? Does your language do the same?
- Edward says "I look forward to it" as a way of showing confidence. What phrases do people use in your culture to show confidence before a challenge?

Great work! Keep learning English with film and TV! ☐