

Fall Off the Wagon | Seinfeld

Vocabulary Breakdown

Hollywood English Club

A bar. Old friends. An alcoholic trying to stay sober. And Seinfeld doing what Seinfeld does best — finding comedy in the discomfort of everyday social situations. This lesson is packed with useful, real-world English.

1. "Having a Fling"

■ A fling is a short, casual romantic relationship — usually fun and not serious.

✓ Often used when the relationship is brief, passionate, and without a long-term commitment.

▶ *"They had a summer fling while travelling in Spain, then went their separate ways."*

2. "Recovering Alcoholic"

■ A recovering alcoholic is someone who was dependent on alcohol but is now actively working to stay sober.

✓ "Recovering" signals an ongoing process, not a finished one. The word is used with compassion.

▶ *"As a recovering alcoholic, he avoided bars and kept a sponsor on speed dial."*

3. "Off the Wagon / On the Wagon"

■ "On the wagon" means someone is sober. "Off the wagon" means they have started drinking again.

✓ These idioms are specifically used for people in recovery. You do not use them for casual social drinkers.

▶ *"He had been on the wagon for two years until the stress of the divorce pushed him off it."*

4. "Keep Your Hands to Yourself"

■ Keep your hands to yourself means do not touch other people without permission.

✓ Said to someone being physically inappropriate. Also used with children to mean stop touching things.

▶ *"The bouncer stepped in and told him firmly to keep his hands to himself."*

5. "Lucky Day"

■ A lucky day is a day when good things happen unexpectedly, often through chance rather than skill.

✓ Used literally or sarcastically. In the scene, it is used sarcastically — things are not going well.

▶ *"He found twenty euros on the pavement and thought: this is my lucky day."*

6. "Cranberry Juice and Vodka"

■ A cranberry juice and vodka — also called a Cape Codder — is a common cocktail.

✓ Relevant because the drink looks like plain cranberry juice, causing confusion in the scene.

▶ *"She ordered cranberry juice and vodka but told the waiter to skip the vodka."*

7. "Who Do You Read?"

■ "Who do you read?" means which authors do you enjoy or follow regularly.

✓ A natural way to ask about someone's reading taste. More specific than "what do you read?"

▶ *"They got talking at the bookshop and she asked: who do you read? He said: mostly Hemingway."*

8. "Obscure"

■ Obscure means not well-known — hidden from mainstream awareness, known only to a small group.

✓ Can be a compliment (I love that you know this obscure band) or a way to show off (I only read obscure authors).

▶ *"He loved discovering obscure films that had never made it to mainstream cinemas."*

9. "Beatnik"

■ A beatnik was a member of the Beat Generation — a 1950s counterculture movement known for jazz, poetry, and rejecting conventional life.

✓ Mostly historical now. Used to describe someone with a bohemian, anti-establishment attitude.

▶ *"With his black turtleneck and beret, he looked like a beatnik straight out of a 1950s coffee shop."*

10. "I've Got News for You"

■ "I've got news for you" means I am about to tell you something you do not want to hear but need to know.

✓ Often used as a warning or a reality check. The news is almost always bad or uncomfortable.

▶ *"You think the meeting was cancelled? I've got news for you — it's been moved to 7am."*

11. Idiom Spotlight: "Fall Off the Wagon"

■ To fall off the wagon means to return to a bad habit — especially drinking alcohol — after a period of stopping.

✓ The idiom comes from the temperance movement. Being "on the wagon" meant drinking water, not alcohol.

▶ *"He had been sober for a year before the pressure of the job made him fall off the wagon."*

Seinfeld: Fall Off the Wagon

Student Worksheet

Part 1: Vocabulary Match

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

WORDS / PHRASES	DEFINITIONS
_____ 1. fling	a) Something rare or not widely known
_____ 2. recovering alcoholic	b) Showing deep understanding or clever ideas
_____ 3. fall off the wagon	c) A short, casual romantic relationship
_____ 4. obscure	d) Someone who used to drink but is now trying to stay sober
_____ 5. insightful	e) To go back to a bad habit after trying to stop
_____ 6. beatnik	f) A phrase meaning 'don't touch me or my things'
_____ 7. keep your hands to yourself	g) An artistic, unconventional person from the 1950s–60s

Part 2: Fill in the Blanks

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

WORD BANK

shopaholic • on the wagon • obscure • lucky day • fling • insightful • workaholic

1. She quit drinking last year. She's been _____ ever since.
2. I can't stop buying shoes online. My friends say I'm a _____.
3. He found a wallet full of cash on the street. He said, "Today's my _____!"
4. They dated for a few weeks in the summer. It was just a _____, nothing serious.
5. That author is so _____. Nobody outside of academia has heard of him.
6. Her comments were so _____. I've never thought about it that way before.

7. My dad never takes holidays. He's a total _____.

Part 3: Build Your Own -holic Word

The suffix "-holic" means someone is obsessed with or addicted to something. Use the clues to create the correct -holic word, then write a sentence using it.

CLUE	-HOLIC WORD	YOUR SENTENCE
Can't stop eating chocolate	_____ —	_____
Addicted to technology/phones	_____ —	_____
Obsessed with work	_____ —	_____
Can't stop shopping	_____ —	_____
Your own idea!	_____ —	_____

Part 4: Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer.

8. What does "fall off the wagon" mean?
- a) To go on a vacation.
 - b) To go back to a bad habit after trying to stop.
 - c) To quit a good habit.
 - d) To take a ride on a wagon.
9. Someone says: "I got news for you — that plan is never going to work." What tone are they using?
- e) Polite and encouraging.
 - f) Confused and unsure.
 - g) Dramatic and direct, often sarcastic.
 - h) Quiet and shy.
10. Which sentence uses "recovering" correctly?
- i) She's a recovering chef.
 - j) He's a recovering smoker — he quit six months ago.
 - k) I'm recovering my lunch right now.

l) They're recovering from happiness.

11. Why is it funny/dramatic that Dick drinks the cranberry juice and vodka?

m) Because he hates cranberry juice.

n) Because Jerry ordered it for himself.

o) Because Dick is a recovering alcoholic and doesn't realise there is vodka in it.

p) Because vodka is very expensive.

12. Art Vandelay is funny in this scene because...

q) He is a real, famous writer.

r) He is George's best friend.

s) He is a completely made-up name that George uses whenever he is lying.

t) He wrote a book about monorails.

Part 5: True or False?

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

13. "On the wagon" means someone has started drinking again.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

14. The phrase "fall off the wagon" originally comes from 19th-century America.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

15. In this scene, Dick knows he is drinking alcohol.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

16. "Keep your hands to yourself" is always used in a serious, angry way.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

17. Greenwich Village in New York was famous for artists and intellectuals in the 1950s–60s.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

18. A beatnik is someone who works very long hours and is obsessed with their job.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

Part 6: Scene Analysis

Answer in complete sentences.

19. The scene uses "dramatic irony." What does this mean, and how does it work in the Dick and vodka moment?

20. George pretends to know an "obscure writer called Art Vandelay from the Village." What does this tell us about George's character?

21. Why is the origin of the phrase "fall off the wagon" a useful way to remember its meaning?

Part 7: Creative Writing Challenge

Write a short conversation (6–8 lines) between two friends. One of them has just fallen off the wagon — but it doesn't have to be about alcohol! Maybe they broke a diet, went back to their phone addiction, or started smoking again. 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 "fallen off the wagon" with a goal? What happened?
- Are you a workaholic, a shopaholic, or a chocoholic? Be honest!
- "Emotion often beats logic." Do you agree? Can you think of a real-life example?
- Seinfeld is famous for characters who are selfish and dishonest. Why do you think audiences love them anyway?

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